

FYI

Audra Dalsoren
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Begin forwarded message:

From: Al Waller <alwaller228@gmail.com>
Date: January 25, 2023 at 8:27:17 AM CST
To: Al Waller <alwaller228@gmail.com>
Subject: Notes from the AD HOC WHITEWATER PARK STEERING COMMITTEE on 1-23-23

Date & Time of the meeting: Monday, January 23, 2023 at 8:00 am

Members: Bob Diebel, Jamie Patrick, Mark Landgraf, Brandon Holstein, Matt Dregne, Regina Hirsch, Vik

Mailing, Alex DeSmidt, Pete Manley, Parks & Recreation Director Dan Glynn

CC: Tim Swadley, Leadership Team, Council Members, Stoughton Newspapers, Sarah Monette, Gary Lacy, Rich Albright

Main agenda item: Surfing Wave Design – Mason Lacy (Discussion & Action)

NOTES:

2 Friday's ago Mason Lacy and Dan Glynn attended a meeting with Uriah and Jeff Shure from the DNR.

Upper management at the DNR is not sold on Stoughton's proposed plan.

Mason and Dan were shocked that the meeting did not go into their planned details but rather went into big picture mode. Several concerns about the proposed underpass. Their DNR contacts said they need to discuss this with their higher-ups.

Mason and Dan felt they were on the pathway to permitting, however the meeting went big picture with large scale questions. In other words they felt the DNR switched the agenda and they were caught off guard. This was a major change from previous conversations. The DNR supervisors are changing the game. The underpass proposal is now a problem and it looks like the project will need to be redesigned again.

The higher-ups are questioning the fill in the river. Mason Lacy said they were blindsided and there are now large regulatory concerns!

Tim Swadley was noticeably concerned and he wants a written response from the DNR.

The city is now in a holding pattern until the DNR makes an official decision on the permitting process. There are several other major concerns, the pneumatic lift gates are also in question. The input gate might get approved but the output gate could be a problem. Apparently this is not a safety concern but the DNR is concerned that this design could set a precedent for amusement features associated with other dams and waterways in Wisconsin.

The DNR said they would respond in 1 to 2 weeks. The DNR did not seem open to discussing this further until after they get permission from the supervisors inside the DNR. These contact names were not mentioned.

Regina wants to personally meet with the higher-ups at the DNR. Apparently, she has some internal connections inside the DNR and she believes they will listen to her.

Mason Lacy said this is his first time ever working with the Wisconsin DNR. When pressed by the committee on how long this permitting process could take, his comment was that the DNR can drag this out indefinitely. He was frustrated but as long as the city of Stoughton continues to pay him for his engineering work, I do not think he cares how long the process takes. His comment is that the permitting process is starting to go in the wrong direction.

The original plan for dam removal was scrapped and now the new permit application is for a dam reconstruction. Since the dam is in great working order it does not need to be reconstructed for the purpose of normal water flow, the only reason for the redesign is now for recreational purposes.

Another concern the DNR has are the boulders in the river after the proposed reconstructed dam. These boulders will actually form a 2nd dam structure as they restrict the flow of water. It is possible that these boulders will need to be permitted as a new dam. Since the DNR originally thought they were taking out one dam but now see they are keeping dam #1 and adding dam #2 this is against their normal mission statement of removing all dams from Wisconsin waterways.

Al's comments:

What was not mentioned during the meeting was the water report from Pleasant Springs where the current DNR ruling is to maintain the water level at 841 feet above sea level. For some strange reason no one wants to be bothered with the facts. The only person that even hinted that this was a real problem was Alex DeSmidt. He is a landscape architect and has a better handle on the laws, rules and regulations of waterways. The ad hoc committee continues to put the cart before the horse, way before the DNR permitting process. The city has approved budgets, sold the city council and used their political clout to sell the Stoughton newspaper. Yet the permitting process has just begun since the design change and new application last May from dam "removal" to "reconstruction".

Fortunately, someone higher-up at the DNR is finally looking at the amusement park idea and weighing the political battle costs of lowering the water level and removing control from the current working dam to a 2nd dam built with boulders. Since the DNR is in charge of regulating all dams in Wisconsin, this permitting issue could become a much bigger problem for them for years to come.

Thank you.

Al Waller

(If you wish to be removed from this "Save the Dam" email list please let me know.)