

Dam razing cost raises eyebrows

Written by Steve Ostermann

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Village Board rejects bids for Lime Kiln Park work, hires firm to design Bridge St. dam repairs, study options for sediment removal

Voicing concerns about cost over-runs for Milwaukee River restoration projects, the Grafton Village Board on Monday unanimously rejected bids to raze the Lime Kiln Park dam.

The decision came after officials were told all three bids received for the dam removal exceeded \$135,000 that Ozaukee County budgeted for the work as part of a federally funded effort to eliminate fish barriers.

Last fall, the village agreed to participate in the \$4.7 million restoration effort, which in Grafton will include the installation of a fish passage at the Bridge Street dam and removal of the Lime Kiln Park dam.

Village officials initially planned to raze the Bridge Street dam but changed that plan after residents passed a referendum in April requiring that the structure be saved until at least 2019. The referendum became a binding vote through a petition drive by the Save the Dam Association.

Residents also passed an advisory referendum asking the village to cover any costs it incurs in preserving and repairing the Bridge Street dam through a downtown tax incremental financing district rather than the general tax roll.

Although most of the village's costs are still undetermined, Trustee Ron LaPean said he is concerned that the work will be more expensive than expected.

"I'm totally against adding money to village taxpayers for the dam projects," LaPean said.

"This was supposed to be funded by the grant, and we're turning around and stuffing costs into the TIF. And we're already taking money out of one TIF district to help pay for another."

Village Public Works Director Dave Murphy said the county received bids ranging from \$193,369 to \$852,040 to raze the park dam, which is partially crumbled and has been in disrepair for years. Terra Engineering of Madison submitted the lowest bid.

County officials, who will make the final decision on the project, informed the village that any cost over the amount budgeted for the work would have to be paid by the village, Murphy said.

Although the village could proceed with that option, Murphy recommended the Village Board reject all bids and re-bid the project after county and village staff drain the impoundment by using a former raceway culvert.

"That will give us a chance to see how much work has to be done to remove the dam" and allow contractors to recalculate costs, said Murphy, who was scheduled to present the board's

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decision to the county's Public Works Committee on Thursday.

Board members concurred with Murphy's recommendation, which was backed by the Public Works Board at a meeting earlier Monday. The trustees' decision came after they also decided to pay Bonestroo Inc. \$26,850 for engineering work associated with the Bridge Street dam project.

Bonestroo will receive \$11,850 to design the reconstruction of the dam's east abutment and \$15,000 to determine options for removing sediment from the impoundment, which the village is also considering to create a more scenic area and allow more recreational activities.

The abutment upgrades, which will be done with the east-shore fish passage work, are required by the Department of Natural Resources for the dam to meet state floodway standards. The reconstruction work has yet to be bid out but is expected to cost \$15,000 to \$20,000, Murphy said.

The village will also have to pay for upgrades to the dam's west abutment, including design work and reconstruction.

Removing sediment is being considered, Murphy said, because the impoundment will be dewatered during the fish passage work — a process expected to lower the water level by several feet.

Rick Schmidt, a Bonestroo manager, said studies indicated there are about 38,000 cubic yards of sediment in the river between the dam and the River Island Park north of Washington Street (Highway 60). Dredging the sediment could cost from \$10 to \$30 per cubic yard, depending on the type of material, removal process and dumping site, Schmidt said.

Testing for contaminants would also be required before any dredging could be done, he said.

Extensive dredging could cost the village \$250,000 or more. However, another alternative is to allow the sediment to consolidate on its own during dewatering, Murphy said.

"If it's muck, it will consolidate more, but if it's sand, it won't," he added.

About 20 people attended the Village Board meeting, including members of the Save the Dam Association.

Bill Harbeck, an association spokesman, said the estimated cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000 to upgrade the east abutment was welcome news. That range is appreciably less than earlier estimates from engineers who projected the abutment upgrades to cost several hundred thousand dollars, he said.

"I think this is fabulous news for the Village of Grafton," Harbeck said.

Village President Jim Brunnquell said the village will do whatever is needed to bring the dam

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into compliance with flood standards.

“When the referendum came back to save the dam, we are under obligation to comply with the rules,” Brunnquell said. “We should be addressing those issues right now.

“I think the numbers that we’re looking at make sense.”

The high bids for the Lime Kiln Park dam and the county’s response that the village is responsible for any cost over-run sparked several protests.

Bill Hass, another association member, said the county should pay for any additional costs, not the village.

“If this is an Ozaukee County project, why aren’t they paying for it?” Hass asked. “I think it’s important that the county not spend any of our money to do this.”

Hass said reports that the county recently received additional federal money for restoration work should mean the village does not have to pay anything for the dam razing.

Tim Adams and Terry Kranz, two local residents who oppose the removal of the park dam, urged the Village Board to reconsider the structure’s fate.

“I don’t think you’ve done the due diligence on this,” Adams told the trustees. “I haven’t heard one good reason why that dam has to be removed.”

But Brunnquell said the Village Board agreed in 2008 to raze the dam as part of the federally funded project and saving it would now require installing a fish passage there.

“Removing the Lime Kiln dam is needed to get the money for the Bridge Street dam fish project,” Brunnquell said.

Design work is continuing on the fish passage project, construction of which was originally expected to begin late this year. The start of construction has now been delayed until June 2011, officials said.