

Village wants more DNR input on dam decision

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
Wednesday, 22 February 2012 16:19

Grafton officials still waiting for chance to discuss agency's requirement of floodgate in abutment work

Grafton officials are expected to meet with Department of Natural Resources representatives in the next two weeks to discuss the agency's decision requiring the village to install a floodgate as part of upgrade work on the Bridge Street dam.

Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said Tuesday that he and Village Engineer Dave Murphy are prepared to travel to Madison for the talks, which the Village Board requested at its Feb. 7 meeting after reviewing the DNR's ruling.

During the meeting, board members voiced their displeasure with a decision that calls for repairs on the downtown dam's west abutment to include a gate, flashboards or stop logs to control water levels.

Although the village's preliminary design for the upgrades did not include the control mechanisms, the DNR determined they are needed so the impoundment can be drawn down in case of emergencies and for dam inspection and maintenance.

Installing a gate — which is expected to cost \$300,000 to \$700,000 — had been considered by the board but rejected as a way to save money on upgrades, which the village is required to complete under NR333, the state law regulating dams and flood control.

Although the village may have little recourse in challenging the DNR ruling, Hofland said the board wants to explore its options.

“The directive by the Village Board is to seek clarification of the state law and to alleviate the capital costs, liability and ongoing maintenance of a gate,” Hofland said.

Hofland said he and Murphy are trying to schedule a meeting with Matt Maroney, DNR deputy secretary.

The DNR has determined the landmark dam must be upgraded to comply with flood-control standards. The village's preliminary plan called for rebuilding a masonry wall, reconfiguring an overlook area and raising the riverwalk to help alleviate flooding problems.

Besides the gate, the board rejected a proposed portage route around the dam, but the DNR also said the route should be installed as a safety measure for canoeists and kayakers.

The agency's decisions were reiterated at the board's Feb. 7 meeting by Tanya Lourigan, a DNR water management engineer, and Eric Nitschke, the DNR's southeastern regional director.

The current estimated cost of the upgrades without a gate is \$410,000, half of which would be covered by a DNR grant awarded to the village. The grant would also reimburse the village for a

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smaller portion of costs above \$400,000.

According to cost estimates from Murphy, increases for additional upgrades would be \$50,000 for flashboards; \$100,000 for stop logs; \$70,000 for a partial gate; and \$500,000 to \$700,000 for a full gate.

Grafton's preliminary design plan was prepared by Bonestroo (now known as Stantec), which has done a number of dam-related projects for the village.

However, on Monday the board voted 6-1 to hire Ayres & Associates to complete a final design for upgrades on the dam's west and east abutments. The Eau Claire firm will be paid \$37,400, which was the lowest of four bids received for the work.

Trustee Jim Grant was the only board member voting against hiring a design firm. Grant has been an outspoken critic of state regulations he said will increase the village's cost share and liability in upgrading and maintaining the dam.

Plans call for the upgrades to be completed by late this year, but Hofland said delays in finalizing the design work could keep the project on hold until 2013.