

New dam costs:

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN

Wednesday, 12 September 2012 18:38

Village to take another look at ‘no frills’ option that could cut price tag of rehabilitation project in half

Concerned about higher-than-expected cost estimates for rehabilitating the Bridge Street dam, Grafton officials have asked a design firm to explore other options for the project.

The Public Works Board on Monday directed Ayres Associates to rework a preliminary design the firm presented in August calling for upgrades that could cost \$750,000 to \$1.2 million.

The design plan — which includes work needed for the downtown dam to comply with state flood-control regulations — calls for repairing both abutments, widening the spillway and rebuilding a west-side overlook area, raising the riverwalk to reduce flooding and adding a 20-foot-wide stop-log structure on the east side to draw down the reservoir for high water emergencies and maintenance.

Village Board members voiced concern about the projected cost when Ayres unveiled the plan, noting the original estimate was \$410,000. Even so, they agreed to have Ayres proceed with design work.

However, in a report to the Works Board, Village Engineer Dave Murphy stated that the cost estimate has been significantly reduced because recent studies indicated bedrock on the east abutment is stable and will not require reinforcing.

As a result, the cost estimate for the design presented to the Village Board in August now ranges from \$578,803 to \$694,564, Murphy said.

In addition, a “no frills option” that scales back items for aesthetic purposes, including changes to the overlook and relaying sidewalk, has a cost-estimate range of \$459,000 to \$550,000, Murphy said. This option is expected to bring the dam into compliance with NR333, the state law regulating dams and flood control, by 2019.

Murphy said the construction costs could vary depending on excavation of the abutments and outcome of bids for the work, which is expected to begin next year.

After reviewing Murphy’s report, the Works Board directed Ayres to provide a cost for designing a plan that meets basic NR333 requirements and a revised estimate for the preliminary design.

“This will allow the Village Board to see the actual cost difference between both alternatives and to award the work which meets the Village Board’s objectives,” Murphy said.

Ayres is scheduled to report back to the Works Board on Oct. 8. A recommendation would then be made to the Village Board for consideration Oct. 15.

Once the design work is completed, the village will have spent nearly \$100,000 on the dam

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before construction, Murphy said.

The state Department of Natural Resources has awarded a \$282,695 grant to the village to defray the cost of upgrades needed to comply with flood-control regulations. The grant can be used to pay 50% of the first \$400,000 of eligible project costs and 25% of the next \$800,000 in costs.

The village's share of the cost would be covered using funds from its downtown tax incremental financing district, which provides revenue for public improvements.

Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said dam upgrades are included in the 2013 budget. The project is also expected to begin in 2013 because the DNR grant is only good through next year.