

MINUTES
August 3, 2021
Special Committee of the Whole – Hybrid Meeting
Joint Meeting between Batavia Park Board and Batavia City Council
City of Batavia

Please **NOTE:** These minutes are not a word-for-word transcription of the statements made at the meeting, nor intended to be a comprehensive review of all discussions. They are intended to make an official record of the actions taken by the Committee/City Council, and to include some description of discussion points as understood by the minute-taker. They may not reference some of the individual attendee's comments, nor the complete comments if referenced.

Chair Wolff called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Chair Wolff; Ald. Miller, Russotto, Beck (online), Baerren, Knopp (online), Chanzit (online), Solfa, Leman, Ayazi (online), Uher (online), Cerone (online) and Vogelsinger (online)

Members Absent: Ald. Malay

Also Present: Mayor Schielke; Laura Newman, City Administrator; Scott Buening, Director of Community Development; Rahat Bari, City Engineer; Anthony Isom, Assistant to the City Administrator (online); Jennifer Austin-Smith, Recording Secretary (online); Lacey Lawrence, Hitchcock Design Group; and Bill Inman, Hitchcock Design Group (online), John Witte, WBK Engineering

Batavia Park Board Present: Allison Niemela (online), Debbie Gentry (online), Kevin Riley (online), Brittany Meyer (online), Pat Callahan (online), John Tilmon, Tara Grey (online), Molly Connolley (online)

2. Discussion: Batavia River Corridor Master Plan Update – Hitchcock Design Group

Lacey Lawrence, Hitchcock Design Group and John Witte, WBK Engineering, presented a PowerPoint presentation utilizing the shared screen feature of Zoom. The presentation included the following information:

- Alternative Evaluation Report 2000; Refined Concepts for Consideration
 - Concept B
 - Concept E (Variation of Alternative 2)
 - Concept C (New alternative as part of Master Plan)
 - Concept D
 - Concept A
- Concept A: Dam Removal with Berm Estimate of Probable Construction Costs
 - Cost \$4,482,650
- Concept B: Full Width Grade Control Structures Estimate of Probable Construction Costs
 - Cost \$13,505,300
- Concept C: Dam Removal with Excavated Pond
 - Cost \$6,557,600

- Concept D: Dam Removal with Restoration
 - Cost \$4,287,800
 - Moving infrastructure would be additional cost
- Concept E: Stepped Dam with Bypass Channel
 - Cost \$13,189,200

The group discussed maintenance costs, safety requirements, dam restoration, dam removal, aeration, liability issues, each concept and the effects on the river. Tilmon noted that Concept C moves the Depot Pond and that would create a need to move all of the existing recreation. The infrastructure needed would be a lot of cost, such as a paddleboat launch, house to maintain all of the items in, and warming house for ice-skating. There is a lot of programming around the Depot Pond. If the pond is moved north we would have to put infrastructure closer to accommodate the different kinds of programming. We would have to move or rebuild all of the stuff we have to be closer to the pond's new location.

Tilmon stated that in every survey administered, the Depot Pond and the River Walk are the top items. The Depot Pond is also a crucial part of the Park District infrastructure. The Park District would like to keep the Depot Pond and the activities in it and surrounding it. The group discussed how no other communities have a Depot Pond, which makes Batavia unique. Chair Wolff stated the Depot Pond is an economic generator for the downtown. That is something that we can't ignore. Uher asked for the City's insurance company to be asked if any of these options would increase liability. Callahan commented Concept E offers the Park District more recreation opportunity and the Park District could deal with the insurance agency regarding liability. Beck stated that she was leaning towards Concept E but the liability and more dangerous conditions is a concern for her. She supports Concept E because of the fish passage and the slightly improved water conditions for the quality of the river.

The Park District and the Committee of the Whole discussed which concepts they would like to go forward to the public forum. The group discussed the pros and cons of each option. Cerone noted that it seems like a struggle eliminating any option from moving forward to the public. Newman stated that since there is so much diversity in view on these five concepts, perhaps we should just move forward with the five.

Newman read the Zoom Chat comments to the group. Alexandra Zelles asked has hydraulic modeling occurred yet? Is or will that study be available on the website? Will this alternative document be available on the website? Newman responded on chat, and read the response to the group, that Lacey mentioned in her presentation that hydraulic modeling has not been done because we are only at the concept phase. Hydraulic modeling will be done on the selected concept. The alternatives that the Council and Park Board select for the open house will be posted on the website. Zelles then wrote 'as a member of the public and an environmental commissioner, I would appreciate Option C or d brought to the public forum.' Newman read Tom Lichtenheld's comment to the group, 'we moved here from Geneva and the most significant difference is that Geneva has no town square whereas Batavia does. And that town square is the pond and surrounding park, with all of its beauty and recreational offerings. Eliminating the pond (C or D) would eliminate a unique, important feature that benefits everyone in Batavia.' Grace Wahler wrote 'we like B and E best of all of the options for folks with a great fear of a major

rapid on option E, they need to look at Yorkville and see how it really is. It's not a rapid.' There were no other public comments on the chat.

Chair Wolff opened the floor for public comment. Dan Kind shared that he is an avid kayaker. Concept E is not a safe option. Leaving part of the dam in place, which is in horrible condition, and then putting a class three rapid along the side of the building and a retaining wall that has no access for any rescue is ludicrous. He thinks A is reasonable because it would allow paddlers to go through. A lot of people paddle south of the Geneva Dam and come to Batavia. Some paddle from Batavia to the North Aurora Dam. If you put the two together, which is what option A or B would do, and you would have a nice half day paddle that someone could do and a lot of people would flock to this area to use this piece of the river. For option E you would have to have special equipment such as helmets, whitewater kayaks, race skirts and strong paddles. The cost for this material would be cost prohibitive for most people. He would prefer B because it would preserve the Depot Pond as part of the river. However, option A would allow a free passage for paddling through Batavia and there would be a real benefit to that.

Sherry White shared that she lives on the west side of the river. They have seen a lot more motorboats than kayaks in the area. She volunteers at the Fabyan Villa and if we choose A or D, there is definitely going to be a difference in the river at Fabyan Villa and Fabyan Parkway. You certainly would decrease the width of the river and where she lives there would be a lot more erosion.

Rex Zimmerman shared he has canoed up this river for thirty years. The visual experience offered by B&E looking up the river is something very exciting. If the velocity of the river changes and the pond is closed, all that would go east. Over the long range, the cost of plantings, cost of what is going to change with the Park District to encase the pond is a great concern. Not only visually, but what the cost would be to maintain over the long run. He bought here because of the view and the experience to stand at the end of the pond and look straight out. The demographic for where he lives is from mid-fifties to eighty. In this particular area, people look for things that are local and things they can enjoy. He has great concern that this is a bit ageist when everyone is discussing kayaking when really people here want the visual experience. He does not hear anyone here talking about people who live downtown. We need to look towards the people who live here and what is important to them.

Tamara Ashby addressed the group. She encouraged the group to present apples to apples comparisons when presenting to the public and that it is very clear. She has sat through all of these meetings and to think about a thirty-minute presentation to the general public and a vote on the favorite thing. Please make sure the presentation is very clear on what the plan is and what it would be like going forward.

Eric Ashby stated that he has seen some really nice leadership with the Park District in knowing where they want to go. He would leave the entire board to think about is the Park District's vision on where they want to go and try to get behind what the Park District is trying to do with this area. The Park District is the custodian of what happens after this decision is made.

Marilynn Wier stated that she agrees with Tilman's point, if you completely get rid of the pond or half of the pond you would be left with the infrastructure. The stairs that go down to the pond for ice-skating is now gone. A huge deal for her family this winter was using the pond for ice-skating. If you use pumps, possibly the movement of the water would no longer allow the pond to freeze sufficiently for people to ice-skate over the winter. We are not just looking at the view or the kayaking but rather the year round enjoyment of the pond. For her she thinks B is the best choice and would love to see the Park District and Council go with that choice.

The general consensus of the group was in favor of moving forward with all five concepts for the public forum.

3. Adjournment

There being no other business to discuss, John Tilmon closed the Park Board meeting at 9:21pm, made by Riley, seconded by Callahan. Chair Wolff asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:22pm; Made by Knopp, seconded by Uher. Motion carried.