

MINUTES
June 15, 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 6:00pm.

1. Roll Call

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

Members Absent: Ald. Russotto, Chanzit, and Leman

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); and Karen Morley, Administrative Assistant

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

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

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

- Comparison Matrix
 - River Ecology/Health
 - Recreation/Trails
 - Dam/Depot Pond
 - Economic
 - Dam Options A, B, C and D
- Dam/Depot Pond Vision Board: Option A
 - Complete dam removal with grant assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
 - Assumes water level elevation drop of 6ft within the Fox River Cannel
 - Option for in-stream habitat structures, pools, Riffles and bank stabilization
 - Install earthen berm to isolate Depot Pond from the River
 - Requires routine pumping to maintain water levels in Depot Pond
 - Add pathway connection from the Riverwalk to the Fox River Trail
 - With the dam removed and the earthen berm separating the two systems would be plus or minus six foot below the water surface of the pond itself. It would

essentially be a perched pond above a river system next to it that would be six foot lower

- Dam/Depot Pond Vision Board: Option B
 - Modification to the existing dam
 - Creating a series of steps to get back up to the six foot height
 - Allow the water level elevations of depot pond to be maintained as it is now
 - This option is less likely to be funded by Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) due to the creation of a new impoundment upstream of the current impoundment
 - No lowering of the water elevation upstream
 - No need for pumping to Depot Pond
 - Creating an earthen berm from Duck Island
- Dam/Depot Pond Vision Board: Option C
 - Full removal of the dam
 - Drop of the surface water elevation upstream to the dam by approximately six feet
 - Maintain some amount of Depot Pond, smaller version
 - Water would be dropped six feet from what it is currently
 - Dredge the pond deeper to allow for surface water present
 - Backfill of the south portion of Depot Pond could be converted into Parks and Open Space
- Dam/Depot Pond Vision Board: Option D
 - Removing the current dam fully
 - Reduce the water elevation upstream by six feet
 - Dredging and backfilling all of Depot Pond and adaptive reuse of the pond area to create the land into a natural area, preservation, trails, and Parks and Open Space
- Next week is the public engagement with the community. Which concepts should be presented to the community for their feedback?
 - Scheduled for June 24th 6pm

The Batavia Park Board and Committee of the Whole (COW) discussed the four options. Tilmon shared he has programming questions. He continued that in option one there is water being pumped and option two there is deeper water. He asked would either option allow for the Depot Pond to freeze. Would it freeze over enough to allow for ice-skating? Lawrence stated that for both options it was the intent to have the Depot Pond maintained at the current elevation it is now. Tilmon explained that moving water does not freeze and with option one having water pumped in to keep the elevation would the pond be able to freeze. Inman answered that he believes it would because it would not pump to the extent of creating a continuous current. Tilmon asked if there would still be the ability for launch access to Depot Pond in Option C. Lawrence responded absolutely. All of the open land area is open for interpretation. The group discussed each option, kayak launches likely possible in all the scenarios, water elevation levels, waterway and infrastructure costs at a macro level, cost comparisons, additional costs depending on the plan design elements, present to the public the inter-relational details of the river and Depot Pond/postpone design elements until future plans are made, and considerations of maintaining the Depot Pond for all residents including those who purchased their property with the intent on having the water feature there.

Newman read an email into the record sent to Ald. Uher from Batavia residents, Dennis and Patricia Storzek, to the group stating the following:

Patricia and I are new to Batavia having moved into the Quarry Stone condominiums last year. Imagine our surprise when we find the river is planning on leaving us. I have just finished reading the results from the survey conducted by the Hitchcock Design Group, a survey we would have gladly participated in if we had been aware of it, and a several questions come to mind. Why have landscape architects been retained for an issue concerning a dam? Would this more rightfully be the area of expertise of an engineering firm? Why was absolutely no mention made of the Depot Pond anywhere in this survey? The question how important is the dam to the City of Batavia is disingenuous. He would suspect that not one person in ten of those responding to the survey realized that if the dam goes away, the pond goes away. If he didn't know better he would suspect the purpose of this question, and the survey as a whole, is to give the City Council some cover when they fail to act to save the dam. What is the different about the situation in Yorkville where the State modified the existing dam to eliminate the roller undertow and added both a fish ladder and a canoe/kayak bypass? Why is this not an option for Batavia? The thought of building a berm and pumping water into the pond is ludicrous. In this day and age of green initiatives the very thought of using non-renewable energy to fill the pond is really going to be a hard sell. He could foresee the situation where the State removes the dam the greenies turn on the pump plan and it doesn't get built. Instead, why not use the ultimate renewable resource, gravity, to keep the pond filled. It has a proven track record and has worked well over the vast number of years. What makes kayakers more important than everyone else? Dropping the river surface eleven feet in the roughly mile and a half on the Fabyan Trail crossing bridge is certain to speed up the current but there is great value in the still water of the pond. Where else can we take our grandkids for a paddleboat ride? Where else can we teach them how to kayak safely without whirling off into the river? Certainly not in the east channel that's for sure. I have read through the alternative evaluation report prepared for IDNR in December 2000. I find it interesting that they had a plan, alternative #1, that turned the entire east channel of the river from above Duck Island to the present dam site into a white water rapids course, eliminated the dam and preserved Depot Pond without the use of pumps. This alternative seems to have the most to offer: eliminates the hazards of the dam, aids fish migration, it preserves the Depot Pond, and offers and actual whitewater recreational experience that is a recreation lacking in the Midwest. This would be good for downtown businesses. A whitewater rapids experience would give Batavia a different attraction that would be good for sports shops, outfitters, restaurants and pubs.

The group discussed what options should be presented to the public at that upcoming June 24th public engagement presentation. Lawrence summarized the conversation with the group:

- Show all four options
- Eliminate trails and comp images, etc.
- Rank by cost but eliminate cost estimations
 - Chair Wolff explained that until engineering is done there is no accurate cost and that is why the cost estimations should not be included

3. Adjournment

There being no other business to discuss, Pat Callahan closed the Park Board meeting at 7:03pmpm, made by Tilmon, seconded by Riley. Vice-Chair O'Brien asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:03pm; Made by Knopp, seconded by Solfa. Motion carried.