

Park Advisory Commission Resolution

Regarding The Huron River Impoundment Management Project Recommendations With Respect To The Stewardship Of The Huron River In Ann Arbor

Whereas, the Huron River Impoundment Management Project Committee of the Environmental Commission (HRIMP) has developed recommendations for the stewardship of the Huron River in the Ann Arbor area that affect Parks and Recreation facilities and Natural Areas and,

Whereas, HRIMP did not provide a specific recommendation for the future disposition of Argo Dam which has been deemed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to be damaged and in need of repair or removal and,

Whereas, the Park Advisory Commission concurs with the findings of the HRIMP report in every other respect and,

Whereas, Argo Dam's current sole purpose is to create an impoundment for recreational activities and,

Whereas, the removal of Argo dam would improve the natural habitat, biology, and overall ecology of a stretch of the river system in Ann Arbor and,

Whereas, the removal of Argo Dam would require the relocation of the rowing community constituency but would enhance the recreational activities of a greater number of other facilities users who desire a flowing riverine environment rich with a greater number of aquatic and avian species and,

Whereas, the three other impoundments within the system are able to satisfy the needs for recreation of those users who desire flat, slow moving water and a pond-like setting and,

Whereas, the rowing community of organized teams that represent area High Schools, a community based club, and the men's Crew team from the University of Michigan, which includes approximately six hundred participants, has established facilities on the shore of Argo Pond and would need to be relocated to new, suitable facilities on other impoundments in order to remain a viable presence in Ann Arbor and,

Whereas, the Park Advisory Commission believes, as a whole, that the rowing community is an important asset to the city because it provides a self funded opportunity for participation in a healthy activity that is the most popular sport at all of the area's High Schools and includes all interested applicants and,

Whereas, Argo Pond is difficult for non-rowers to use when the rowing crews are practicing or racing due to marine right of way rules giving the rowers the right of

way through the majority of the non weed infested waters on the pond, and

Whereas the rowing clubs have multiple boats that require megaphone use for coaching, the sound of which carries across the Pond and into surrounding neighborhoods, and

Whereas the rowing clubs use gasoline motored launches to coach crew boats which are known to regularly violate the "no wake" impoundment rule and,

Whereas, the Park Advisory Commission believes that it is possible with careful investigation, cooperation, and diplomacy to find suitable locations for the establishment of rowing facilities at other impoundments within the city's purview to meet the needs of the rowing community and,

Whereas, the projected costs over twenty years for the activities and consequences for either removing Argo Dam or repairing it in place are similar and,

Whereas, the use of funds to remove the dam represent a one-time investment and the use of estimated funds to repair the dam does not include the replacement of said dam due to the finite nature of the length of life for any dam and,

Whereas City staff have proposed the creation of a canoe livery just below Barton Dam which would create a longer river trip between it and the Gallup livery. Such trips are very popular and are one of the few current sources of financial break-even park activities currently offered by the City and,

Whereas the new river stretch would be faster water with intermittent gentle rapids and would likely draw boaters looking for white water opportunities from near and far to downtown Ann Arbor and,

Whereas a further parks consideration is the potential to create an affordable and safe railroad crossing at the northern end of Bandemer Park thus greatly enhancing the safety and accessibility of biking and walking trails between the City and Skyline High School, Bird Hills Nature Area, Barton Park, and the Border to Border Trail and,

Whereas currently it is estimated it would cost several million dollars to build an underpass under the tracks between Bandemer Park and Huron River Drive. But if the dam were removed it is possible that the river level would drop enough to allow for a walkway under the railroad trestle similar to the walkway under the trestle just below Barton Dam. Such a walkway would likely be significantly less expensive than an underpass and therefore more affordable in the near future to build. Particularly as Skyline attendance ramps up, a safer pedestrian path to negotiate the railroad tracks is highly desirable and should be created as soon as possible and,

Whereas, it has been pointed out by both the Huron River Watershed Council and the County Water Resources Commissioner, that removing the dam will create a

longer stretch of fast water river. This provides for natural control and remediation of sediment, weeds and algae, and run-off pollutants such as phosphorous. It will also create a cooler water habitat thus providing an environment for a wider range of healthier fish and animals. Further, according to the Water Resources Commissioner, it is expected that dam removal will create substantial floodplain and stream buffer which can provide flood storage and protect water quality.

Resolved, that the Park Advisory Commission recommends that a targeted study be done of the Bandemer Park to Huron River Drive railroad crossing study to identify whether dam removal would allow a walkway under the adjacent trestle and whether this would be less expensive than the underpass which was recently proposed by a consultant's study and,

Resolved that the Park Advisory Commission recommends that as long as there are rowing clubs using impoundments within the city's purview for their activities that the new River Stewardship Committee, as proposed in the HRIMP recommendations, formulate an appropriate fee structure, shared use plan and schedule, and set a deadline for all megaphone use to be phased out. Such a body should also work to formulate a coaching strategy that will not entail violations of the "no wake" impoundment rule and,

Resolved, that the Park Advisory Commission recommends the removal of Argo Dam because of the potential for improvement of the recreational and natural environment in the area affected by the existence of said facility and,

Resolved, that the Park Advisory Commission recommends that Argo Dam be removed in order to enhance the number of aquatic and avian species that would enrich the environment and for whom the removal of the dam would create a more sustainable habitat and,

Resolved, that the Park Advisory Commission believes that there is adequate remedy to those parties for whom the removal of the dam would create inconvenience or a change of location and,

Resolved that the Park Advisory Commission recommends the immediate commencement of an investigation to determine adequate new locations for the establishment of rowing facilities on other impoundments that are of an equal nature to the existing facilities on Argo Pond and that such facilities be operational before the removal of Argo Dam.

Submitted for approval May 19, 2009 by:
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