

**BATAVIA PARK DISTRICT
SPECIAL JOINT BOARD MEETING WITH THE BATAVIA CITY COUNCIL
JUNE 6, 2023
SCHIELKE GOVERNMENT CENTER
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
100 N. ISLAND AVENUE, BATAVIA, IL 60510**

CALL TO ORDER – The City of Batavia Special Committee of the Whole Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Alderman Uher.

ROLL CALL – City Council members in attendance were: Aldermen Beck, Solfa, Baerren, Leman, Uher, Lanci, Miller and Vogelsinger. Absent: Aldermen Wolff, Chanzit, Ajazi, Malay and Cerone. City Administrator Laura Newman was also present.

CALL TO ORDER – The Special Joint Board Meeting between the Batavia City Council and the Batavia Park District was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Callahan.

ROLL CALL – Park Board Commissioners in attendance were Larson, Bell, Tilmon, Gray and Callahan. Staff in attendance were Executive Director Allison Niemela and Executive Assistant Lindsey Williams.

ITEMS REMOVED/ADDED/CHANGED ON AGENDA – None.

NEW BUSINESS –

A. CONCEPTUAL DESIGN DISCUSSION AND CONSENSUS REGARDING THE FOX RIVER

CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN: FACILITATED BY HITCHCOCK DESIGN GROUP – Executive Director Allison Niemela welcomed Bill Inman and Lacey Lawrence from Hitchcock Design Group. Inman shared the purpose of the meeting, which was to review the Batavia Fox River Corridor Master Plan and develop a consensus around the infrastructure.

Inman reviewed agenda as follows:

- **Master Planning Process Update** – Inman reviewed the timeline and different phases of the project. The project is currently at the Envision Phase to reach a consensus on the infrastructure.
- **Previously developed Dam/Depot Pond Infrastructure Alternatives** – Lawrence reviewed the different concepts previously presented to the Park Board, City Council, and the community.
- **Recreation Alternatives Report (Commissioned by Batavia Park District)** – Lawrence reviewed Recreation Alternatives for Concepts A and B/E. Inman addressed the group and asked for feedback from the Park Board.

President Callahan gave an overview and purpose of the study for recreation alternatives to gauge the engagement of the river. President Callahan also referenced the findings of the Batavia Park District's recent Community Needs Assessment stating that the Riverwalk is the most utilized park for the District. The Park Board maintains the position of the importance of maintaining the Depot Pond.

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- **Discussion and Consensus (Impoundment vs. No Impoundment)** – City Administrator Laura Newman and Executive Director Allison Niemela opened the floor for feedback and discussion from City Council and Park Board Commissioners.

Park Board Commissioners shared their feedback as follows:

- Commissioner Tilmon stated his vision for creating increased recreational opportunities by engaging the river.
- Commissioner Larson agreed about increased engagement opportunities for the river and taking pride in being a river community.
- Commissioner Bell also stated her agreement with increased engagement opportunities and long-term engagement planning.
- Commissioner Gray would like to see the river be utilized more with increased accessibility.

City Council shared their preferred concepts.

The Park Board shared their preferred concepts as follows:

- President Callahan raised concerns about the pumping mechanism. He stated the need to make a generational decision to enhance the river and prefers “Option B”. He cited conversations with constituents and what the community prefers with an enhanced river experience. He also prefers “Option B” because it is a more natural approach.
- Commissioner Tilmon shared concerns about the pump mechanism and the sounds emitted by the pump and prefers a natural flowing river approach. He also shared concerns about the longevity of maintaining the pumping device and the height of the river with the pump. He is in favor of “Option B”.
- Commissioner Larson echoed concerns about the pump mechanism and prefers “Option B”.
- Commissioner Bell also has concerns on the mechanics of the pump and prefers a natural flow. She also acknowledged the cost difference to residents with each option. She is in favor of “Option B”.
- Commissioner Gray echoed the concerns and opinions of the Board with “Option B” and would like to move forward with improvements.

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Executive Director Niemela stated this is a legacy decision for both the Park Board and City Council and encouraged City Council to re-visit the Recreation Alternatives Report commissioned by the Park District.

Public comments followed the joint City Council and Park Board discussion.

MATTERS FROM THE PUBLIC -

- Anne Teichert, Batavia Resident – Expressed concern about the pump feature and the maintenance of the pump.
- Rex Zimmerman, Batavia Resident – Discussed the longevity of the project and expressed concern about the pump as it pertains to electric rates and maintenance prices. He is in favor of the natural flow of the pond.
- Jim Hagemann, Batavia Resident – Discussed the aesthetics of the plans and questioned the future of Duck Island. He also mentioned adding to the river will encourage investment from private enterprise to defer costs.
- Joe Culotta, Batavia Resident – Addressed the unknown parts of the project and concerns regarding the Depot Pond holding water, sustainability, and current water depths for recreation.
- Eric Ashby, Batavia Resident – Cited Yorkville’s riverfront area as an example of recreation and economic development opportunities. He would like City and Park District to enhance the downtown area through investment.
- Julia Rohman, Batavia Resident – Addressed a few funding concerns and stated the importance to move forward and not lose out on available funding. She also cited previous meetings where Batavia residents voted in favor of “option B”.
- Marilyn Weiher, Batavia Resident – Stated the need to create recreation opportunities to remain competitive with neighboring communities. She does not want to diminish path space along the river.
- Jean Vincent, Batavia Resident – Would like the plan to be in the best interest of the environment and reflect the natural beauty of the river. Vincent also requested to enhance existing Park District properties in a more natural way.
- Mike Stec, Batavia Resident – Discussed the different plans and how they will affect the fish and the visuals of the pond and river.
- Nancy Bell, Batavia Resident – Raised a question to the group about the berm and pump catching debris.
- Dave Weiher, Batavia Resident – Addressed a question on Archimedes screw stating that pressure is necessary (from a dam) for the screw mechanism.

Next Steps – City Council will add the project to their June 27th agenda for further discussion and a vote.

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MATTERS FROM COMMISSIONERS – None.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD – None.

ADJOURNMENT - With no further business to come before the Board, the special meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM by President Callahan. A motion was made by Tilmon, seconded by Gray. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.



Secretary, Board of Commissioners

Line prepared by:
Lindsey Williams, Executive Assistant