

Item 15-1

September 5, 2007

To: Mayor's Office, City of Madison

The attached letter comes from neighbors in the Reservoir Park area and the information contained in it is based on the information provided by Al Larson of the Madison Water Utility and staff from Montgomery Associates at a neighborhood meeting in Reservoir Park on August 9. Since that meeting, our Alderperson, Tim Gruber, has sent a letter to his constituents containing information on sound levels from the proposed new pump house that differs slightly from what we were told at the meeting. We're checking into this with Tim, but nonetheless, the focus, expectations and request of our letter remain the same.

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To: Mayor's Office, City of Madison

We, the undersigned residents of the neighborhood surrounding Reservoir Park, ask that the City of Madison halt all progress toward the placement of a high capacity well and pump house in Reservoir Park until neighborhood residents receive a copy of the standard operating procedures that were used to site this well and other wells within the City. We are unclear on why this location within a small park in a residential neighborhood was chosen, and we would like to see a list of all sites that were reviewed as possibilities for the new well and the criteria that were used to select this location.

The neighborhood recognizes the need for a high quality water supply in Madison, but it also believes that the placement of a high capacity well and large pumping structure should not occur in a residential neighborhood until an assessment of the impact that both could have on the neighborhood is addressed with resident involvement.

It doesn't appear that the City has a standard process in place that involves citizens in the siting of city wells and pump stations and that addresses not only issues of water quality, quantity and pressure but the impacts of the well on the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be placed including housing values, aesthetics, traffic and health issues.

We would like to see such a process established and specifically request that an advisory committee made up of individuals from the neighborhood be appointed by the Neighborhood Association for involvement in all meetings of the municipality regarding this property and a review of all other potential properties in the area.

If there are criteria for siting city wells, we would expect that an important one would be that every attempt be made to site them in areas that are either more institutional or commercial in nature or, if that is not possible, then in areas that have sufficient open space, vegetation, etc. to keep them from intruding as much as possible into residential neighborhoods.

In the case of the proposed well in Reservoir Park, this is a small neighborhood park closely surrounded on three sides by residences that is already impacted by a communication tower as a joint venture between the city and private interests. Park use has been increasing in recent years as more families are returning to the neighborhood. Although owned by the Water Utility, the land has been maintained and used as a park for more than 50 years and is one of the amenities associated with living in this neighborhood.

We learned at the neighborhood's first and only meeting with Water Utility staff in August, after a test well had already been drilled in the park, that should a well be placed in the park, it would involve building a pump house approximately 60' x 60' and 18' tall, a driveway, parking spaces and new electrical boxes. If a filter system is needed, which

from our understanding of the test results to date, the building footprint would be even larger.

If the well and pump house are sited where currently proposed, in the park north of the Larkin Street tower, the building will be directly across the street from several residences and clearly visible and audible from many more. Due to its large size, it will be totally out of scale with the homes in the neighborhood.

That portion of the park from the tower to the park's northern boundary (approximately three-quarters of its length) will no longer be available as park space. With the tower, the reservoir and a new pump station the useable size of this park will be reduced to approximately 40% of the parcel. A large number of large white oak trees will need to be removed; other nearby oaks will be negatively impacted by construction and likely die eventually, changing the character of that part of the neighborhood.

The noise from the pumping station, which we were told by Water Utility staff would sound like a car engine running 24 hours/day, would be added to the noise that neighbors already endure from the Larkin Street communication tower.

We do not believe that all of this won't negatively impact property values in the area and were told by at least one city appraiser that this was quite likely. That such a major impact on a city neighborhood is being proposed without input from the neighborhood flies in the face of responsible land use planning as espoused by many nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and planning staff in leading cities today.

Because the Water Utility owns Reservoir Park, we understand it is an attractive location for a well. But that doesn't mean, given the context within which the park sits, that it is a good location. We believe there are other, possibly better, locations for the well within this neighborhood and nearby, including Hill Farms, Hoyt Park and the UW Campus, and we would like to be part of a process that looks at all of those locations to determine which one makes the most sense, not just from a financial standpoint, but from a quality of life standpoint as well.

The only meeting that has been held with the neighborhood thus far occurred approximately two weeks ago. We were told that the Utility had also looked at sites on the UW campus since much of the water use was to support campus needs and that no other sites were considered. When asked why the campus site was not chosen, no answer was forthcoming. It has been mentioned that Well 31 or the West Campus Well was originally intended to be part of the Co-Gen plant. We are curious as to whether this is true and if so why its construction on campus did not occur.

At the same meeting we were also told that well siting distances were restrictive due to DNR regulations. We are concerned and skeptical that the well placement in Reservoir Park meets set back restrictions and would like confirmation of this from the DNR and the City. In addition, due to the well's link to a 6-million-gallon reservoir that is more than 80 years old, we request that this reservoir be inspected for all aspects of its

structural integrity as well as the quality of water within it immediately and that the test results be shared with the neighborhood. We do not believe, given the current plans, that the reservoir inspection can wait until 2011.

Finally, the City has been a leader in recycling, which has greatly reduced the need for siting new landfills. We would like to see the City be a leader in water conservation as well. Encouraging residents to use less water would decrease the need for siting new wells, allowing the aquifer upon which we depend for our water more time to recharge and maintain more sustainable water levels over time.

In conclusion, we ask that the City review the siting of Reservoir Park Well 31 with neighborhood input, develop a standard operating procedure for siting wells that includes not only hydrology but impacts on quality of life for neighborhoods, begin a water conservation program, and form a citizen committee to help establish criteria for the future siting of wells and pump stations. We would like to be part of this process, beginning with reviewing all potential properties for the proposed Reservoir Park Well 31 and await your response. Hopefully as our dialog continues, a working relationship between the neighborhood and the City will develop in a manner beneficial to both parties.

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