

DATE: July 7, 2014
TO: Madison Plan Commission
FROM: Jim Powell, Lake View Reservoir Citizen Advisory Panel member

RE: Lake View Reservoir Public Hearing [Agenda Item 10]

Plan Commissioners:

The Madison Water Utility plan being presented to you has unanswered questions related to it. As a member the Utility's own Citizen Advisory Panel, I have to say the Utility engineers are pretty much proposing what they had originally planned and that the CAP process was simply a ruse so Utility staff could tell you today "we had a lot of input." We were even told at one point that the one thing the CAP could do was choose the color! The CAP process has major flaws which have been conveyed repeatedly to the Water Utility Board, but since it actually rejected the original CAP's public participation recommendations in 2012 and instead instituted its own watered-down process, it is clear that the only place for meaningful citizen input will be at meetings such as the one today.

SIZE

The proposed reservoir is larger than all but eleven others in the nation. When asked to justify the size, Utility staff has said that it's needed for fire protection—that the entire North and East Sides are woefully unprepared for simultaneous major fires. When asked to have the fire marshal come speak to the CAP about this, the Utility declined. When asked "Has the City been in danger all these years with only 55,000 gallons sitting on top of Lake View Hill?", the Utility was moot. When asked why smaller reservoirs in multiple locations wouldn't work, the Utility staff said that wasn't feasible. But the huge size of the proposed water tower has greatly increased costs, reduce the number of qualified builders who might even bid on the project and have otherwise guaranteed that this monstrous project will have a monstrous price tag.

DESIGN

The two reservoir design is unusual, there are only a few in the country and there are few contractors who would even bid on such a design. Since the design is more costly than alternatives, one has to ask why this is the Utility preferred design. Perhaps it is meant to be the capstone to the Utility principal engineer's career?

Because of its enormity, the reservoir will need to be built of steel, effectively increasing its costs and excluding qualified builders who might use less expensive concrete on a regular size reservoir. As for steel, a less expensive option is Cor-Ten unpainted steel which could save on repainting costs over the years. (I believe the Utility staff has admitted that it would be costs savings of \$650,000 over fifty years.) But Cor-ten has been ruled out, even though other reservoirs are built with it.

The massive silo design will also affect the way people experience the park and the neighborhood. The current four-legged design allows considerable visibility through the structure. The massive silo will block sight completely.

RUNOFF

As a project at the top of the highest point in Madison, the water runoff issue is huge. Immediately downhill from the water tower is the old nurses' dorm adjacent to the old County tuberculosis sanitarium. Yes, the same nurses dorm that you saw on your agenda last fall and are waiting to see appear again. The County is still working its stormwater management plan for the whole southeastern side of the hill, which includes the water tower. How can the Water Utility bring its project to you when there is no stormwater management plan in place? And why would the Plan Commission want to consider these intimately intertwined projects separately? We have been trying to get the City and County to work collaboratively on storm water management since the Lake View Hill Master Plan was approved in 2009, but to no avail.

Connected with the fate of the nurses dorm is the County proposal to make the nurses dorm area a parking lot while the water tower project is going on. Through the parking lot down the hill from the Human Services building can accommodate vehicles displaced by the water tower construction, it has chosen instead to park cars in what is supposed to be a natural area. In addition, the County wants all the heavy equipment and trucks to come to the site via Lake View Ave, a narrow residential street, rather than from Northport Drive, a six-lane state highway. The County doesn't want to be inconvenienced, yet it feels residents should be.

COST

With the Water Utility proposing double digit rate increases, it seems that its stance is, "we need to replace infrastructure, we'll pay whatever it takes." I know the Plan Commission isn't primarily concerned about costs, but the Common Council and ratepayers should be. I do hope the Commission, however, is mindful of how early process decisions—such as placing 1,300,000 gallons of water for the entire eastside in a single location—may not prove to be cost-effective but rather cost prohibitive. But without any alternatives to study, we'll never know.

CONCLUSION

Please defer any action on this item until a stormwater management plan is in place, and until the massive two-reservoir design can be justified as to both need and cost.

Sincerely,
JIM POWELL

Lake View Ave.
Madison, WI 53704

Stouder, Heather

From: Jim Powell [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 07, 2014 8:17 AM
To: Parks, Timothy; Stouder, Heather
Cc: Weier, Anita
Subject: Re: Public testimony for 7/7/14 Plan Commission mtg, agenda item #10

Additional comments for the Plan Commission:

1) The Powell family has counted Dane County Human Services empty parking spaces on several weekdays at several different times. There were an average of 40 unused parking spots. This exceeds the 25 displaced parking spots due to water tower construction . The parking area near the water tower is rarely full. Therefore, there is not a compelling reason to create additional parking spaces on the deteriorating asphalt area northeast of the nurses dorm, which already experiences unmitigated stormwater runoff problems. For the first time this past winter, the County agreed to limit its excessive use of road salt in this little used area, at our behest (since the salt is killing our oak trees which are as close as three feet from where the County dumps salt). Allowing parking and associated salt use will exacerbate the situation. There is a mature oak grove within a few feet north of the nurses dorm; parking vehicles there will be tantamount to killing them. Just south of the nurses dorm is a rock retaining wall, which until April had mature trees above it, helping retain water during rain events. The County cut down all these trees, even though stormwater management plan had not been developed. Why? the stated reason is that the trees may hurt the wall. Parking cars there will compact the soil and exacerbate the already bad runoff situation. The drawing appears to vary from the text in that the south parking is down the slope from the nurses dorm, in an existing meadow. I am at a loss as to how the County thinks this is acceptable in a conservancy park.

The fact that that this new parking for County employees will be next to my house is itself a compelling reason NOT to allow the County to allow its employees to disturb my family daily early in the morning when sufficient existing parking is available to them. Granted, some of the unused parking spaces currently available are down the hill from Human Services building, but I am sure that the Dept of Human Services leadership can encourage its younger, more fit employees to walk the additional 50 feet or so. The County Public Health Department probably encourages County employees to walk more, so this could be their little contribution to their own health and to not disrupting the neighbors' lives solely for their own convenience. I know a number of people who work in the building; if asked, I am sure they would be glad to use available parking spaces instead of disrupting my family's lives.

2) Actual monitoring of construction site runoff is notoriously lax. Fortunately citizens who lives on Lake View Avenue plan to make any problems immediately known to the Water Utility, City Engineering, the alder and the mayor. Hopefully this will ensure timely mitigation of these easily anticipated problems that will surely result in a project of this size with a such a steep incline and

an extreme existing stormwater runoff problems.

On 7/6/2014 1:11 PM, Jim Powell wrote:

Please send my attached testimony regarding the proposed Lake View water reservoir to the Plan Commissioners. Thank you.