

# Sinissippi Improvement District turns down seed money for project

by Gloria Hafemeister

Voters in the Lake Sinissippi Improvement District turned down a proposed budget that would have included seed money to begin a major waterway improvement project relating to the upper portions of Lake Sinissippi and the Rock River.

The project, discussed at the three-hour meeting Saturday morning at Hustisford High School, involves the channel extending from Ox-Bo Marine to the bridge at County Highway S. Specifically it involves river channel restoration, environmental restorations and enhancements and stabilization of the shoreline.

The 168 voters present learned details about the project and costs and about potential methods of funding the \$1.5 million project by use of available grants, loans and an increase in the tax assessed by the district for the 2015 budget.

The proposed budget would have been funded by increasing the assessed charge on tax parcels from the current \$90 per year to \$205 per property each year. An alternate way of funding the budget increases would have been to assess each property an additional \$1 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation.

According to Jim Gronowski, president of the Lake Sinissippi Improvement District board, "The condition of the channel area continues to degrade with erosion of shoreland mass caused by high water. Bank erosion and loss of channelization creates a larger area

with lower stream velocity increased sedimentation and reduced water depth. The waterway project is designed to halt further bank erosion and restore the river channel."

Gronowski also said the board has been working to obtain grants from a variety of sources to help fund the project.

"Most grants require some portion of local cost-share match, so the Lake District will need to increase its own tax revenues and also explore financing," he said.

Greg Farnham, LSID board treasurer, and Gronowski outlined details of the proposed project, noting the need, how it would be accomplished in phases, and expected results.

Farnham said, "This is not a spontaneous project. We've been at it for over 10 years."

The district has been working with engineering partners

Stantec Consulting and Foth Infrastructure and Environment and the Conceptual Design Report for the project has been prepared.

The report includes a review of historical aerial photography that illustrates the changes that have occurred over the years. It also builds on previous Lake Sinissippi studies including one by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2009 that identified multiple engineering approaches to address sediment accumulation and loss of aquatic habitat within the study area.

The initial phase would include channel dredging and construction of a peninsular extension, two rock vane structures and restoration of three islands and wetlands.

Farnham said this phase addresses activities in the area of greatest need and provides

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post-construction monitoring and adaptive management to guide future enhancements.

The second phase would include construction of the remaining project features including additional sediment relocation for island creation, habitat enhancements and channel improvements.

Farnham pointed out that a survey of lake property owners in 2011 had a 46 percent response and of those responding, 78 percent said they wanted sediment dredging projects and 10 percent were undecided. Among those surveyed, 54 percent said they were willing to pay more than the current \$90 per property surcharge to support large scale projects.

Property owner Bob Gibbons commented it is important to continue to maintain the quality of the lake and the \$90 charge has been in place for a long time, and it would not be out of line to increase the amount.

Commissioner Bob Grueneberg said when the board

discussed the project, he voted no. He pointed to a report that indicated there had been little change to the sedimentation in the lake between 2005 and 2013, indicating that the problem may have solved itself with time.

Phil Allen has lived on the lake for 42 years and was involved in forming Sinissippi Harvesting to remove weeds from the lake following a draw down that resulted in the establishment of cattails in some portions of the lake, resulting in 96 homeowners having no access to the lake.

"I'm passionate about the lake but I'm opposed to this project from the standpoint that it's too premature," he said.

He added, "I'm not against the project, but I'm concerned about the timing and about unintended consequences."

While some of the residents were concerned not enough study had been done on the project and the new technologies being proposed, others said there had been enough study and it is time to move

forward.

Voting down the budget that included the increases to funds to get the project started will not mean an end to the project. The board plans to continue looking at funding options and other methods of dealing with the issues. Members also plan to continue shoreline restoration projects.

The meeting also included election of two commissioners. Voters chose incumbent Dave Behl and Allen to serve on the board. Gary Knipper who has been a commissioner, was defeated.

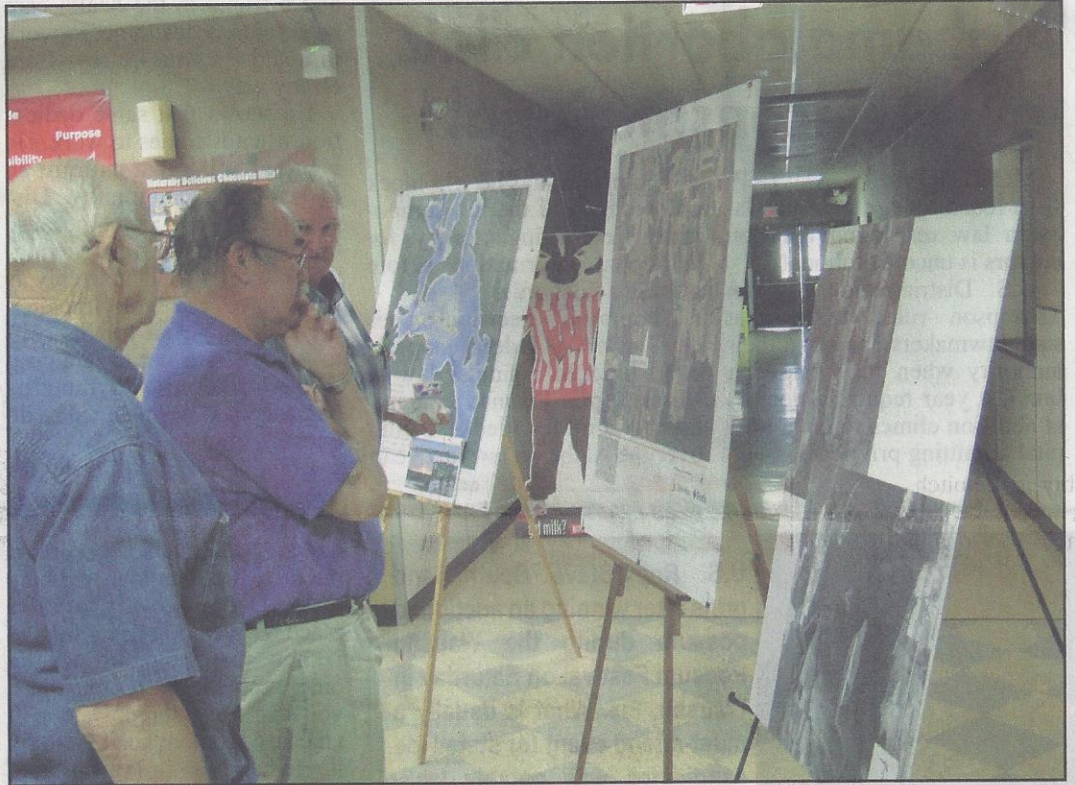
Allen had previously requested that the board consider adding an additional commissioner.

"I would like to be on this board but I don't want to run against these commissioners," he said. "They have done a good job."

Farnham said the Lake Sinissippi Improvement District is established by state statute and the size of the board is specified in that statute.

# Lake —

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GLORIA HAFEMEISTER/Daily Times

A proposed project that would have stabilized shorelines and included river channel navigational improvements was put on hold by voters of the Lake Sinissippi Improvement District after a three-hour discussion on Saturday at Hustisford High School.

## SINISSIPPI

# Lake plan rejected by voters in district

BY GLORIA HAFEMEISTER  
for the Daily Times

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