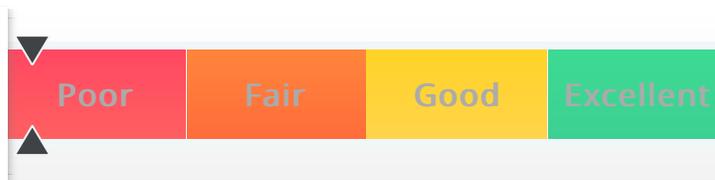


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Janesville City Council votes to remove Monterey Dam

JAKE MAGEE
Tuesday, March 28, 2017



ANTHONY WAHL

An aerial of the Monterey Dam in Janesville on Monday.

◀ 2 of 3 ▶

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The council on Monday also:

— Approved a TIF

JANESVILLE—After nearly six hours of discussion, the Janesville City Council voted Monday night to remove the Monterey Dam.

Councilman Jens Jorgensen was the sole member to vote to keep the dam.

More than 35 residents spoke during the meeting. Most, like Jorgensen, favored saving the dam. One man, Aaron Aegerter, spent his allotted four minutes at the podium playing an acoustic guitar and singing a song supporting removal.

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amendment and agreement for the creation of an Upper Lakes Foods distribution center at 4298 Capital Circle.

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— Approved transferring \$950,000 from the city's general fund to its insurance fund to supplement higher-than-expected health insurance draws from 2016.

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“Go with the current, not the past. This whole dam thing just cannot last,” he sang.

Resident Gary Schultz has offered to pay \$200,000 to repair the dam. At Monday's meeting, he offered to repair the entire dam himself with his own workers.

Council President Sam Liebert said under the law, the city has to put out a request for proposals and can't just give Schultz the work.

The speakers included a Madison attorney who represented residents living along the Rock River concerned about how removing the dam would affect their properties.

Officials later said if the dam were removed and water receded from residents' backyards that the state would own and be responsible for the exposed land but that it wouldn't be public land strangers could use.

City staff recommended the council vote to remove the dam and restore the shoreline of the affected Rock River corridor. Councilman Rich Gruber made a motion following that recommendation, and Councilwoman Kay Deupree seconded.

“The city believes this is the long-term fiscally responsible thing to do,” city engineer Mike Payne said.

When the council members began discussing the dam, Councilman Jens Jorgensen spent several minutes asking city staff, Beth Wentzel of consulting firm Inter-Fluve and Bill Sturtevant and Bill Fitzpatrick of the Department of Natural Resources a handful of questions.

Jorgensen asked if there's a plan in place if the Rock River drops more than 5 inches

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downtown, as officials have predicted.

City engineer Mike Payne said there's no plan in place for that scenario. The city has no reason to believe the models used to predict the water drop is inaccurate, Payne said.

At one point, Jorgensen asked to hear comments from a consultant he had brought in at no cost to the city. Council President Sam Liebert declined the request and told Jorgensen to question only city staff, the DNR and Wentzel. Several people in the audience—many of them Friends of Monterey Dam members in favor of keeping the dam—groaned in disapproval.

“Overwhelmingly, the people of Janesville want what we have. They like what we have now,” Jorgensen said.

Eventually, Jorgensen made a motion to amend Gruber's by requesting the Monterey Dam decision be taken to the voters at August primary election. Several audience members applauded.

After a few moments waiting for a second, Liebert declared Jorgensen's motion dead, drawing boos and hisses from the audience. Several residents left the meeting immediately after.

Jorgensen then amended the motion on the floor to table the decision until the new council elected next week was in place.

“We're just so unsure of what's going to happen in the future,” Jorgensen said. “It's concerning.”

Councilman Paul Williams seconded, but only he and Jorgensen voted in favor of the motion. Jorgensen later made a motion to further explore the issue before voting, but it failed for lack of a second.

Jorgensen said the overwhelming feedback he heard from voters was to save the dam.

Jorgensen came out in favor of saving the dam early on in the process. He told the audience he heard his constituents and tried to put the power in their hands and that those who were frustrated should take those feelings to the ballot box next week.

Councilman Doug Marklein eventually spoke and said he, unlike

slapping, kissing

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Jorgensen, kept his opinions on the dam to himself. Doing so has allowed the people Marklein has spoken to to share their honest thoughts. Marklein has heard about 50-50 support for removing and keeping the dam, he said.

Marklein called Jorgensen the “poster boy” for saving the dam and that after a few more years on the council he'd understand that immediately advocating for a side doesn't allow a councilmember to listen to the entire community. Jorgensen took issue with the comment and said he hoped Marklein would regret saying it.

Marklein asked if \$700,000 for repair is still an accurate estimate for how much repairing the dam might cost. The process of removing the dam and restoring the shoreline has been estimated to cost \$1.1 million.

The \$700,000 estimate is the city's best guess based on years-old bids. The city doesn't know for sure how much repair would cost, Payne said.

The meeting began at 6 p.m. The council made its vote just before midnight.

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