

Property values in lake district raise questions

The proposed Rock-Koshkonong Lake Improvement District steering committee has drawn the district boundaries, and a Rock County official has computed property values for the district.

The district, though, includes land not directly on the Rock River or Lake Koshkonong. Phil Boutwell, assistant to the Rock County administrator, also figured equalized values for land adjacent to the water in Jefferson and Rock counties.

Members of the steering committee dispute those figures and question their value.

The equalized value of land on the river and lake in Rock County is \$48.67 million, Boutwell said. The value of directly contiguous land in Jefferson County is \$87.95 million, he figured.

However, the equalized values for the entire district are \$128.53 million in Rock County and \$102.99 million in Jefferson County, according to Boutwell.

The figures are meaningful because those organizing the district have claimed that property on the river and lake in Rock County has more value than that in Jefferson County. Boutwell's study appears to show that claim is untrue.

Rock County has claimed that it pays the main costs for an expensive dam that mainly benefits Jefferson County. The vast majority of Lake Koshkonong is in that county. Boutwell's figures show more value in Rock County for the proposed district.

The organizing committee chose the district boundaries. The boundary lines follow highways and section lines and include properties that stand to benefit from the district because they are near the river or lake, said Jerry Richardson, one of the organizers.

Richardson believes that even the owners of land that is not directly on the lake or river will sign petitions in favor of the district.

The value of land adjacent to the lake and river in Rock County is much higher than what Boutwell says it is, Richardson said. Some valuable land is held by subdivision or condominium associations, such as Rock River Leisure Estates, he said. Boutwell assigned no value to such lands, Richardson said.

Boutwell defended his figures.

"That table consists of riparian property owners," Boutwell said. Riparian owners are single owners with land directly on the water, he said.

The table of riparian values was created to show each county what its stake in the river and lake is, Boutwell said. That is why he included property in Fort Atkinson that is on the river but not included in the district, he said.

The steering committee finds the land values Boutwell assigned for the district more reasonable, Richardson said.

Because Rock County will have more than 50 percent of the land value in the district, it will conduct public hearings and take action to establish the district, if the residents petition for one.

The boundary includes land on both sides of the Rock River north of Indianford and describes a wide circle around Lake Koshkonong and the river south of Fort Atkinson.

The district skips Fort Atkinson, though. It resumes on the other side of Fort Atkinson, encompasses the river and stops at the Jefferson city limits.

Fort Atkinson can join the district by action of its city council, if it wishes, Richardson said.

The legal description is being drafted. After that, the steering committee will petition residents. Richardson hopes to have the petitions back by September.

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