

MARCH, 1977

Conservation panel complains to council—

City, county spar

REED-ROGER
RT. 1
SEARSBORO, IA. 50242

6-77

over Arbor Lake plan

Citing "differences of opinion," the Poweshiek County Conservation Board has asked the Grinnell City Council either to accept an existing Arbor Lake development plan "verbatim" or handle the entire project itself.

That word was delivered to the council Monday in the form of a fat document that contained everything from a map of the lake area to a three-page position paper outlining the Conservation Board's stance on the controversy.

First Ward Councilman Rick Ramsey called the county agency "thin-skinned," and Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Miller said he was "not elected to let them . . . tell us what to do."

Swimming

County Conservation Officer Roger Reed, who prepared the

county's argument, wrote in his position paper that the problem stemmed from a suggestion by the city that swimming might be provided as an activity at the still-to-be-developed lake.

"Having considered the specific and close supervision needed by that activity, the board realized that it is not in the proper position to adequately provide for this activity," Reed wrote. "It also was noted that this request is one of many points of conflict between board and council interests that have actually occurred in recent years. Consequently, the board, while readily willing to accept (its) responsibility to develop Arbor Lake, expressed at (its) meeting of Feb. 23 the necessity of doing this in accordance with those plans already presented to the

council and state conservation officials in August 1976."

'Buy Out'

Some councilmen suggested that the city allow the Conservation Board to "buy out" of the agreement, but others wanted to postpone that kind of action until there is further discussion.

The council voted, therefore, to have the chairman of the Grinnell Parks and Recreation Commission and the chairman of the council's Building and Grounds Committee (Ramsey) meet with members of the Conservation Board in an attempt to iron out differences.

That action did not come, however, until after considerable discussion of the Conservation Board's position. Ramsey, who attended the Feb. 23 meeting along with Reed, Parks and Recreation Director Steve Moss and City

Manager Ted Clausen, told the council Monday that the county agency was "taking our suggestions as criticism."

Contract Terms

Some councilmen viewed the flap as an attempt on the part of the county to get out of the maintenance contract agreement. Under that plan, the county is responsible for maintenance of the land area surrounding the lake, while the city is responsible for the actual water area. But the contract allows either the city or the county to terminate the agreement if one or the other is not living up to its end of the bargain. That requires six months written notice.

"I think we have a very valuable contract with the county," Ramsey said, "although I'm concerned that the Conservation Board is so thin-skinned. But I think we'd

be making a mistake if we let them out of it."

At-large Councilman A.C. Eisenman disagreed. "I'd like to accept money from the county and do the work ourselves," he said. "Let's just negotiate how much they'll give us."

'A Sin'?

Miller was even less enthusiastic about the county's position. Asking if it was "a sin" for the city's parks director to ask about swimming facilities at the lake, Miller said the council was within its rights to broach any subject it liked. "If they don't like it, that's too bad," he declared.

The agreement under which the redevelopment of the lake is taking place was signed in 1969 and renewed in 1974. The latter agreement included the so-called Whittaker property, a

79-acre tract near the lake, in the development project.

In the ultimatum delivered Monday, the county agency indicated its willingness to provide Grinnell "supplementary funds up to \$45,000" to aid the city in completing the redevelopment.

Monday's vote to discuss the matter further with the board was unanimous. But no date has been set for the meeting.

Curfew

In other action, the council renewed its discussion of the possibility of instituting a curfew in an effort to slow the increase in vandalism.

Recently, the council passed an ordinance governing activities in city parks, and that measure was intended to help curb vandalism. But some still prefer the idea of a curfew.

Eisenman suggested that a "town meeting" be held to

debate such a step, but that idea was scrapped—at least temporarily—to allow Police Chief Bill Peters to go to both the high school and junior high school to discuss the matter with students.

"I don't care for a curfew," Peters told the council, "but we've got to do something. Vandalism, larcenies and the like are up in Grinnell. What I'd really like is some kind of law on loitering, but our lawyers say we can't get a constitutional ordinance."

Junior High Principal Michael Fitzgerald cautioned against a "negative" approach to the students, however.

"We're accusing an awful lot of good kids," Fitzgerald remarked. "I think we need a positive approach to this."

No decision will be made until after Peters has talked with the students.

The council also discussed a letter drafted by the city manager concerning the problem of dead birds at some downtown locations. At an earlier meeting, the council voted to authorize sending such a letter to the owners of property at which such a problem exists. The letter sets a deadline for cleaning up what the Poweshiek County Board of Health has called a "health hazard."

Acting on a motion by Eisenman, the council voted Monday to authorize the city manager to contact the State Board of Health concerning the problem, in case the letters do not produce the desired results.

Other Business

In other business Monday, the council:

COUNCIL—

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