

H-R editorials

Commitment needed

The Poweshiek County Conservation Board has decided to spend \$5,000 during the current fiscal year on the first stages of redevelopment at Grinnell's Arbor Lake.

It hardly seems the sort of appropriation that is necessary, particularly in light of earlier promises to spend \$15,000 per year on the project over a three-year period. City Manager Ted Clausen said last week that the \$15,000 figure was never actually put in writing, although a written agreement was signed by the city and county outlining what steps would be taken to develop Arbor Lake. Under that plan, the city would be responsible for the water area, while the county would develop land surrounding the lake.

We believe the city has amply demonstrated its commitment to the project. A contractor has been at work, scooping the tons of silt from the lake bed, and Clausen said last week that the job is nearly two-thirds finished. Thus, the county can hardly argue that Grinnell has failed to live up to its end of the bargain.

It remains to be seen just how much the county can accomplish with \$5,000. Plans for the lake include development of access roads, the clearing of some timber, the landscaping of a picnic area, and other site-improvement projects. When completed, the lake will not only have been restored to its original clear-water state but will have the attractive surroundings necessary for appeal as a fine recreational area. We submit that the County Conservation Board will have to dig a bit deeper if all that is to be accomplished.

When appropriation time rolls around for the next fiscal year, we hope the county will be a bit more generous. Grinnell has budgeted \$40,000 for its share of the work, and we believe the county should at least match that. Arbor Lake, after all, will be open to the entire county, not just Grinnell.

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The county wants out

Members of the Poweshiek County Conservation Board are seeking to withdraw from an agreement with the city of Grinnell concerning the maintenance of Arbor Lake.

The Grinnell City Council received a letter last Monday to that effect, and the council promptly referred the matter to its legal department for consideration. Councilmen are expected to attend the next meeting of the Conservation Board in an effort to settle the dispute.

As usual, the problem involves money. Conservation Board Chairman Marion Onthank of Grinnell told The Herald-Register last week that his agency's one-mill budget raises only \$65,000 for the fiscal year, and \$40,000 or more of that budget already goes for maintenance throughout the county. Onthank pointed out that the board's withdrawal from the maintenance agreement with the city would not have any effect on the primary item of concern: the redevelopment of the Arbor Lake area. The county still plans to participate in the initial development of the land surrounding the lake.

But we think the county agency has missed a very important point. While we understand the board's desire to reserve some capital for the purchase of more land in the county, it is necessary not to lose sight of the fact that Arbor Lake will provide a recreational area serving roughly 45.5 per cent of the county's total population—more, when one considers that out-of-town people will also be able to enjoy the facilities.

There have been enough problems with Arbor Lake without yet another setback. Since the County Conservation Board has entered into an agreement with the city, we do not believe it should be allowed to renege. If, as Onthank suggested last week, there is federal funding available for various projects, efforts should be made to secure such money. And the county should commit itself fully to the Arbor Lake project and the subsequent maintenance of the area.

Grinnell, after all, remains a part of Poweshiek County.