

Robert Williams, PE
805 Des Moines Drive
Windom MN 56101

October 1, 2008

Mayor Tom Riordan
City Administrator Steve Nasby
Members of City Council
444 9th Street
Windom MN 56101

RE: Windom Island Park Dam

Dear City Leadership:

I am resigning my position on the City "Dam Stakeholder Committee", which appears to be seriously biased towards a predetermined outcome. I note the following:

(1)
DNR Windom Dam photos dated 8-18-2005 and 4-7-2006 indicate the DNR knew the dam riverbank was eroding well before 2007, the date used by SEH as when this situation started. It was a long-term failure that one could conclude from the photographs was deliberately allowed to occur. I do not know when the City had knowledge of this failure. Timely maintenance and completion of a 20 year old temporary repair could have prevented the current situation.

(2)
I have provided evidence from the North Dakota State University (see Exhibit A), based on experience on the Red River, of the benefits of low head dams in protecting pool areas. While the Red River has generally higher flow rates, the principles discussed are applicable to the situation in Windom. The response of the City and SEH in a recent meeting was to trivialize these concerns and any connection with Windom.

(3)
I have provided an example of my slope stability concerns using an example from along a state highway in Crookston (see Exhibit B) as something that should be seriously considered in Windom. Again, my concerns were trivialized with the message being "It can't happen here." Yes, it CAN happen here. It would be prudent to consider why it hasn't happened in Windom, yet.

(4)
I recently happened to come across correspondence dated 9-16-2008 from SEH that trivializes any scour concern at bridge piers. SEH then goes on to note as fact: "Based on the original bridge plans, these pipe piles extend about 300 feet below the river bed."

As you are aware, MnDOT previously expressed concern about the stability of the Highway 62 bridge in conjunction with a dam removal; this is in part because the pilings are much shorter than SEH is representing them to be. A more reasoned review of the bridge plan on file in Windom by multiple staff members indicates the 20" diameter pier pilings are approximately 35.5 feet long, which includes the length from within the pier cap to the bottom of the piling. Depending on subsurface conditions encountered during construction the as-built lengths may vary somewhat. Actual pile driving reports if they still exist, would be located at the Bridge Office in St. Paul.

MnDOT may well have other comments on this matter in the future. As a resident, professional engineer, and taxpayer I am as a matter of ethics very concerned when such concerns that can have very serious consequences are taken too lightly. As a river resident I look to the level of care the city has shown for public infrastructure and have to assume that it may treat private property at risk due to city actions no better.

(5)

I made a review of the file the city has regarding the river and dam history on Thursday afternoon October 9. I also made a review of the dam survey responses turned in as of that date. I noted the following breakdown at the end of Thursday afternoon:

Keep the dam and reservoir:	27	38%
Rock riffle and reservoir:	28	40%
No dam, no reservoir:	15	22%

I (and Ron Tibodeau) was very surprised to learn that as of the close of business the very next day the tally became:

Keep the dam and reservoir:	32	33.5%
Rock riffle and reservoir:	30	31%
No dam, no reservoir:	34	35.5%

While this alone wouldn't be noteworthy, to the extent that some are making conclusions about community sentiment from this data, it must be commented on. In our door to door efforts and by word of mouth, we have noted a very high level of support for the reservoir and the wetlands environment it has created. When the ecological and other reservoir benefits are mentioned, the support becomes even higher. To the extent that this data has apparently been skewed by one interest, it should not be considered meaningful. The ducks, herons, egrets, pelicans, geese, mussels and muskrats all seemed to like it as well, how many votes do they get?

We have put forth a plan centered around a dam and creating 1-2 specific river channels in the reservoir area which we contend is engineering feasible and has the clear potential to create a long term solution to this matter, including the sediment issue. Several of the proposed solutions are consistent with our long-term approach. In the meantime, we also suggest effort be given to at least minimally stabilizing the existing dam which the city has every right to do.

Finally, I note the following wording from Windom City and Cottonwood County official resolutions from April, 1959 which speak for themselves:

"That the Des Moines River is considered to be one of Windom's most valuable assets, not only for the benefit of present residents, but as an attraction to the future industrial and residential expansion of the City:

"It provides a scenic view along which many homes have been constructed and are continually being constructed. It provides the site for recreational areas, which are vital to a healthful environment for its residents and neighbors."

"The river provides a source of beauty to the City which cannot be measured."

"Parks and playgrounds have been developed by the City along its shores which attract literally thousands of people every year to enjoy family reunions, picnics and hours of recreation."

"That the preservation of the Des Moines River in Cottonwood County by improving the same is deemed to be important to the recreational life of the people of our county and surrounding areas, as well as an enhancement of the living conditions as a whole."

Sincerely,

Robert Williams