

RLIA Comments to City Council on 6/20/23:

Hello. My name is Susan Trier and I'm speaking on behalf of the Rock Lake Improvement Association (RLIA). We'd like to make a few brief comments on two issues.

The first issue is Rock Lake's water levels. Today's water levels are due to a lack of rain. Rock Lake experienced a similar situation in 2021 and RLIA and the Jefferson County's Land & Water Conservation Dept co-wrote an in-depth article in the Leader to explain where Rock Lake's water comes from, how those waters are managed, and the impact of rain on lake levels.

With this drought, both the City and the LWCD received numerous phone calls from residents and RLIA began to advocate in May to discuss this issue through a forum, rather than another article in the newspaper. A forum which seeks to educate residents about the complexity of the issue as well as gather residents' input is valuable for clear and open communication. It is also required by the DNR if the City decides to start the process of asking the DNR to review whether the date to hold back water to achieve summer water levels should be adjusted earlier to catch additional spring rains.

RLIA has met with City staff to advocate for the public forum and review the City's historic water level logs and correspondence. We had multiple conversations with the DNR department who sets our dam's operating orders. These orders specify the water levels, the dates for those water levels, as well as the minimum discharge into Rock Creek. In our discussions, we reviewed the history of the development of our current order, as well as the process to change that order-- either by changing the water levels or changing the dates to meet the existing water levels. We also consulted with the Land and Water Conservation Department for their perspective.

We are very pleased that the Council is interested in exploring this issue. In order for a forum to be effective, the stakeholders of this issue (City staff, DNR, the LWCD, RLIA and JRLC) need to meet shortly and discuss how to proceed. Clear coordination between the stakeholders will be critical to have a successful forum.

We are glad to share our research with the Joint Rock Lake Committee at their July committee meeting and look forward to working together with all the stakeholders to start the community discussion and evaluation of the situation. We will also update the earlier Leader article in case the stakeholders believe it is a valuable addition to the discussion.

The second issue we would like to discuss is the Sandy Beach renovation. This is a critical project where the City has the opportunity to re-think how storm water is managed---a chance to incorporate practices that seek to manage storm water where it falls (sometimes called green infrastructure) vs. getting the water to the lake as fast as possible (sometimes called grey infrastructure). In the process, the City can help educate residents on what they can do on their own properties to manage storm water as well as protect Lake Mills' greatest iconic asset—Rock Lake.

As you begin to think about the restaurant, we urge you to site it similarly to The Sand Bar, which was the previous restaurant. The Sand Bar was about 130' from the shoreline. We would like to see this 130' distance maintained as a minimum setback. As you may recall, Sand Bar patrons enjoyed gorgeous lake views but the restaurant's placement also offered unimpeded beach access to non-restaurant visitors as well as some privacy for restaurant patrons using outdoor seating. We calculated the Sand Bar's distance using old aerial shots.

Another aspect of the restaurant we'd like you to consider is requiring the installation of pervious surfaces for the outdoor seating area and walkways so that these improvements will minimize surface runoff.

Runoff from the restaurant's roof should be managed with a rain garden. Another possibility is to have the majority of the roof runoff be channeled into a rain garden and then a portion be directed to what the City of Madison's green infrastructure group calls "raingarden light"-- which is simply a rain chain discharging into a 5'x5' square of amended soil planted with some native plants. This option is a much smaller footprint but was found to increase infiltration about 55%. It would be interesting to have each option as a demonstration practice for residents and visitors.

Lastly, we would like to strongly encourage you to revisit your thoughts about the size of the parking lot. In Mead & Hunt's concept design, the number of spaces

was expanded from 127 to 335. That design also included a banquet facility. According to the City's recent survey, the majority of respondents' did not desire a banquet facility. Consequently, the size of the parking lot should be reduced. This might actually be a good time to think about re-visiting the project's full-concept design since other aspects like cabins are also being discarded.

Thank you so much for your attention. Good luck in your upcoming work session. We look forward to continuing these conversations with you.