



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

October 31, 2016

Zoning, Neighborhoods, & Development Committee
Milwaukee Common Council
City Hall
200 E Wells St, #205
Milwaukee WI 53202

Dear Chairman Bohl and committee members –

Thank you for holding a public hearing this past week on the proposed rezoning to accomplish the removal of the Estabrook Dam.

I am writing to express my support for the rezoning of the parcel, the plan to remove the dam, and to offer my commitment to the conservation of public spaces and protection of parkland in the County. As you know, I have partnered with the City and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District to implement a plan to end the decade long debate over the Estabrook Dam and ultimately remove the structure. That plan rests before your honorable body to accomplish the fiscally prudent and ecological sustaining decision to remove the dam.

The plan, in brief, requires rezoning of a park parcel from Parkland to Institutional, which will allow the transfer of the dam to MMSD. It is important to note that the Institutional designation allows for park uses of the land. Following removal, the parcels will be rezoned to parkland with your body's permission and all parkland will be transferred back to the County. There is legal certainty in the agreements between the County and MMSD that none of these lands will leave public ownership or be used for anything other than park.

Rightly, you have raised questions about this process. I'd like to assure you that this process is more democratic and has allowed for more public input. In fact, the Common Council can be the body that can finally bring democracy to this issue and give the overwhelming majority of citizens a voice.

Estabrook and all our County parks are key destinations for many in our community. That is why, over the last five years, I have increased the amount of parkland and invested millions into making our parks better and more accessible. With your help in tearing down the dam, we will be able to invest millions more into the parks that are often neglected.

Support for this plan is not shallow. It runs deep in our community from environmental groups to the Village of Shorewood, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council, and the City of Milwaukee. This support has been public and vocal. The Journal-Sentinel editorialized on Oct 4th on this plan, "*Under the plan, the property in Estabrook Park would be rezoned by the city and turned over to the sewerage district, which would tear down the dam next year and restore a section of the Milwaukee River as a*

*free-flowing stream. It may not be the Green Bay Packers' power sweep, but we hope the end run works."*¹


The Milwaukee Courier opined this past weekend, *"Repairing this dam would not support our community and, to the contrary, is an example of how our taxes are wasted at a time when we need them spent wisely...That's why this newspaper supports the plan to remove the dam. If we don't demand a change, then we won't see one."*²

Environmental leaders from the Milwaukee Riverkeeper, River Alliance of Wisconsin, River Revitalization Foundation, Trout Unlimited, and the Urban Ecology Center added on October 5th, *"The decision rightly gives the government agency responsible for providing flood management services to the area, the ability to actually manage and minimize flood risk in the area."*³ I am sure you are hearing from your constituents, just as I am, that repeat their calls and support for removal of the dam.

With the leadership of city alders, the Mayor, and MMSD, we have put forth a plan that will bring out fiscal savings for the taxpayers and improve the ecology and natural state of the river. I urge and request your honorable body to support file 160339 so that we may take this needed step forward.

I am open to meeting or discussing the concerns or questions you may have at any time.

Thank you,



CHRIS ABELE
Milwaukee County Executive

CC: Members, Milwaukee Common Council
Mayor Tom Barrett
Kevin Shafer, Executive Director, MMSD

¹ <http://www.jsonline.com/story/opinion/2016/10/04/editorial-end-run-remove-estabrook-dam-worth-effort/91561816/>

² <http://milwaukeecourieronline.com/index.php/2016/10/28/the-estabrook-dam-should-be-on-your-radar/>

³ <http://urbanmilwaukee.com/pressrelease/environmental-groups-support-milwaukee-countys-decision-to-remove-the-estabrook-dam/>