

Dear Burlington Common Council,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Veterans Terrace and Burlington Community Fund. Over the past year, we have watched closely as our community has wrestled with what to do about our aging dam. We made a conscious decision to not speak publicly about the issue until we were presented with all options. This gave us the time to thoughtfully consider all possibilities and the affect that each might have on both Veterans Terrace and our community as a whole.

We would like to begin by thanking the many community leaders who have been working behind the scenes to give us several options going forward. Peter Riggs and those around him have worked tirelessly to get the DNR to work with Burlington to model a plan that would allow us to have the option of saving the dam and lake. He has done a fantastic job of presenting all options available to both our Board and to the Burlington community. We thank him for his transparency and leadership. We would also like to thank Shad Branen and others who have presented options for us to consider if the dam were to ultimately be removed. We firmly believe that those who dream big and think outside the box will push us all to make sure that the area surrounding Veterans Terrace will be a beautiful gateway to our downtown for decades to come.

So where does Veterans Terrace stand in this debate? After considering all options, we strongly feel that the future of our building and the Burlington Community Fund is at stake. We have taken a risk/reward approach to our decision and hope that you will do the same. Here are our thoughts on what we consider to be the final three options:

Option 1: Vote to remove the dam and drain the lake at a cost of \$1.5 million. This cost returns the lakebed to its natural state. This has way too much risk and, in our opinion, has very little reward. The potential for there to be a devastating odor present for many months or years (the past tells us this is a real possibility) is a risk that our business can't afford to take. The remaining lakebed would create an eyesore right at the entry to our business district. The odor and look resulting from this option could harm Veterans Terrace and the Burlington Community Fund in a way that could be almost impossible to recover from.

Option 2: Vote to remove the dam and drain the lake at a cost of \$1.5 million(ish) AND turn the lakebed into an area that can be used by the community at a cost that is completely unknown. While we can see the potential for beauty in this option, what we haven't seen is a presentation that assures us that we won't have years of foul odor and mess before we have something that is beautiful. We also haven't seen a presentation that tells us how much this would ultimately cost us. We believe that decisions as to what would replace the lake could take years to be finalized and our business and financial future would be at risk that entire time. While the reward might be a beautiful area in five or ten years, we feel that we can have an equally beautiful area without taking this risk.

Option 3: Vote to replace the dam and save the lake at a cost of \$5 million. In our minds, this is the only option that ensures the future of our business and the non-profit that it supports. The lake has been a beautiful, vibrant part of our community for generations. Veterans Terrace has had a front row seat to incredible sunsets, joyful summer activities like picnics and family fishing outings, prom and homecoming pictures, and of course the dam has been the photo backdrop for just about every wedding and event we have ever hosted. The visitors to the dam have almost always been respectful of our weddings and we think most of them appreciate all that Veterans Terrace brings to our community.

The lake and dam are beautiful! We are hoping that the city is not willing to risk losing Veterans Terrace (and potentially other surrounding businesses) to create something that might potentially be beautiful down the road (at an unknown cost). To do this when we can take almost no risk and save something that we already know is beautiful seems like an obvious choice. We realize that dredging the lake is also being considered as a part of this option. Because that would require the lakebed to be exposed for a longer period, and therefore a longer period of time that there will be a foul odor in our community, we hope that the city will coordinate with us and others to push this work into the late Fall/Winter season when it won't have as great of an affect on our business community.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage others in the community to follow our lead and be proud of the fact that we are a community that is diverse in thought and action. What is beautiful and useful to one person might be seen as an eyesore or completely useless to another. That doesn't mean either person cares less about our community. It's our differences that make us stronger in the end. It's our differences that make us a vibrant, thriving little town that we can all be proud to be a part of.

If the Common Council votes to save the dam, and we hope that they will, then let's all work to make sure that our Echo Lake reaches its full potential! It is our hope and mission that Veterans Terrace (and the Burlington Community Fund that it supports) will be here for decades to come, serving our Veterans, our community, and the surrounding area. We are excited to see just what Burlington will accomplish if we all work together.

Thank you for your time and for your thoughtful consideration of our request to save Echo Lake and dam.

Sincerely,

Joel Weis, President of Burlington Community Fund

Beth Reetz, General Manager of Veterans Terrace

Members of Burlington Community Fund:

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