

Approved Minutes for the Town of Rocky Ripple Special Meeting, Feb. 24, 2011

Attendees: Robert Tomey, Carla Gaff-Clark, Angela Herrmann, Cathy Hurt

The meeting was called to order at 7:33pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The board was introduced.

This meeting was called to present and discuss the Army Corps of Engineers "Indianapolis, White River (North), Flood Damage Reduction Project, Phase 3B". The Environmental assessment for this project has just been released. A copy of the plan including a photograph can be accessed through the town website, RockyRipple.com.

Project Overview

The latest plans for Phase 3B call for a wall between the canal and Westfield Blvd (this will be called the "canal wall" in these minutes). The wall would be about 6 feet tall. There will be a gate over the canal that will connect the wall to the levee behind the Riviera Club. The wall will run along Westfield Blvd. and end in the Butler athletic fields (Butler Bottoms). The canal path would be accessed by a highway off-ramp type system at the flood gate.

Overview of Waterflow Changes on the White River

On the Rocky Ripple website, there is a link to the NOAA hydrology information for the Nora station. There, you can see historical records for flood information.

16 feet of water at Nora is considered moderate flood stage. For comparison purposes, the water level at Nora for "great flood of 1913" was 22.4 ft. The level for the New Years flood of 1991 was 19.19 ft.

Between the year 2000 to 2009 there were 5 events where the water was over 16 ft at Nora. In the decade preceding that there were 3 events. On average, that is a flood event every 2.5 years for the last 20 years. There were 14 events from 1900 to 1989, which averages one every 6.4 years.

The river has changed a lot in the last 15 years since Rocky Ripple rejected the Army Corps of Engineers Flood Damage Reduction project in 1996 (this will be called the "river wall" in these minutes). Continued construction and paving of surfaces upstream Rocky Ripple will contribute to more and higher flood events in the future.

Citizen Input

The floor was opened for citizen input, as follows.

- Several people noted that the proposed canal wall would "wall us in".
- If the existing levee is left as is we will flood- it's a matter of when, not if.
- Several people stated that they would be willing to be part of a class action lawsuit.
- The canal wall was proposed because the river wall was rejected.
- Q: Is the canal wall plan a solid proposal?
A: The environmental assessment for the canal wall was done with a finding of no significant impact. This allows the plan to proceed.

Q: Is the Army Corps of Engineers (herein called "the Corps") asking for input?

A: Yes. That is the next step in proceeding with the plan.

Q: Is it a matter of options- canal wall or river wall?

A: Not necessarily. Right now the only proposal is the canal wall. We would like to offer the alternative of the river wall (if that is indeed what Rocky Ripple citizens want.)

Q: So we can't ask the Corps to do nothing?

A: Probably not

- The canal wall was not part of the proposed plan in 1996. In 2004 we asked the Corps to reconsider the river wall. A line item was added to the budget for an impact study, but then hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and any funding for levees was directed there.
- We don't want to start a new project, we want to alter Phase 3B.
- It will literally take an act of congress to get a river wall.
- It was asked "Most people in town are against the river wall, right?"
A chorus of "no!!" was the response from attendees.
- We will need a new environmental study for a river wall now- things have changed a lot in 15 years.
- River beauty is not all of what makes Rocky Ripple unique and a great place to live. I would support a river wall if homes were not taken.
- We are getting much more water now than in 1996. Pavement up north is making it worse. We need a new assessment. FEMA has expanded floodplain/ floodway designations in the last 15 years because more pavement means more runoff. The water runs higher and faster now.
- If the river wall is built, how will construction equipment get access to the levee? In Broad Ripple they took a lot of trees. They will compromise the existing levee during the construction. We will lose river access.
- Sewers will come in the next few years. The canal wall plan does not protect them in case of a flood. This affects more than just Rocky Ripple.
- If/when we have a flood event we will lose houses and trees too. If the canal is walled in that will affect drinking water for a large part of the city.
- You can't make an omelet without breaking any eggs- construction headaches will be worth it to get a river wall.
- The construction on the existing Warfleigh wall was not too bad and the wall is not bad looking.
- A river wall would cut off several homes at the 4900 end of Riverview Drive.
- The wall at the Riviera club will be 10 feet high. This is not an insignificant wall to have in one's backyard!
- The Corps knows a lot more now than they did in 1996. Don't get hung up on wall height.
- Q: What is the town board's intent to mitigate division in the town? How will we petition the Corps if we can't agree? The Corps has spent so much money and time already that they will not listen to us if we are divided.

A: We do need to have a consensus before we approach the Corps. So far, residents have been overwhelmingly for the river wall. The board has not heard from many people that are against it. But we need to work one step at a time. Right now the proposal is for the canal wall. We need to stop that (if indeed that is what Rocky Ripple citizens want). Then we will need a new environmental impact study before we can put in a river wall.

- It was asked “Does anyone here want the canal wall?”
A chorus of “no!!” was the response from attendees.

It was asked for a show of hands if you want to stop the canal wall. A majority of hands were raised.

- Q: How long has the levee been here?
A: Since 1930s.

We haven't flooded since that time- this air of panic and fear is not warranted.

- The power of the written word is strong. Write your representatives to let them know you are against the canal wall.
- Water levels have increased over the years. The levee is 80 years old and has not been maintained. It was determined to be in deteriorating condition in 1990. Big trees on the levee are causing even more deterioration. The levee will not hold out forever. We need to protect our property.
- We have already had a big tree fall behind the town hall during a high water event. When it fell it took out a huge chunk of land. Fortunately, we had people walking the levee during the high water event to check on the levee and we were able to find and fix the hole in a timely manner. (Thank you Adam Garvey for all your work in fixing the hole!)
- The canal wall is not new. The Corps said they would build either a river wall or a canal wall when they presented their plan in 1996. They were very clear about it.
- If we decide to push for a river wall the town board should get approval from each resident with a home on the river. It affects them directly.
- Non-river homes are affected by the walls too.
- Q: Do we have legal recourse?
A: Maybe
- Q: Could we have the town attorney research legal responsibility for home owners on the river to maintain their part of the levee?

A: This is a very complex issue. The levee was built by the WPA and ownership went to the city of Indianapolis when it was complete. Indianapolis claims that they turned it over to Rocky Ripple. There are no deeds, but supposedly Rocky Ripple owns the levee from the town hall up 54th Street/ Ripple Road. Homeowners own their piece of the levee along Riverview Drive.

- In 1996 we were divided regarding the river wall. We are united now in wanting a reassessment.
- Q: Is there money for the canal wall project?
A: the money has not been appropriated (yet). They need to finish the project one way or another (canal wall or river wall) or the project will not do what it was intended to do.
- Thanks to the town board for their actions on this issue.

Resolution

As the comments received to date have been virtually unanimous against the canal wall, Angela proposed the following:

1. A resolution to stop the canal wall.
2. A resolution to ask the Corps to increase the time for public comment to 90 days. (Currently the time for public comment ends March 4, 2011.)
3. A resolution that the board supports flood protection for the Town of Rocky Ripple.

Robert seconded all three. Carla made it unanimous. The resolutions were passed.

Community Meeting Monday, February 28

Rocky Ripple is not the only community that is against the canal wall. The surrounding communities are also against it. We support them with our resolution, and they will help support us.

To that end, there will be a community wide meeting Monday, February 28, 7:30pm, at the Riviera Club (5640 North Illinois Street) where we will discuss further action to oppose the canal wall. Please attend and spread the word!

Residents can also help by writing their representatives. Individual letters are much more powerful than a form letter, so write in your own words. A contact list was handed out & is attached to this report.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hurt

**To Contact your Public Officials about the
Indianapolis, White River (North), IN Flood Damage Reduction Project, Phase 3B**

Resource list:

· Office of Senator Richard Lugar
1180 Market Tower
10 West Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204- 2964
(317) 226-5555

Congressman Andre' Carson

· Washington Office
425 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515-1407
Phone: 202-225-4011
Fax: 202-225-5633

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District Office
300 E Fall Creek Pkwy N Dr.
Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46205-4258
Phone: 317-283-6516
Fax: 317-283-6567

Army CORPS

· Wm. Michael Turner
Chief, Environmental Resources
Section, Planning Branch
Department of the Army
U.S. Army Engineer District, Louisville
Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 59
Louisville, Kentucky 40201-0059

Indiana House of Representatives

· State Rep. Ed DeLaney
Indiana House of Representatives
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786

· Call toll-free (from anywhere within Indiana):
1-800-382-9842
or directly at (317)232-9600