

Alton Flood Wall, New Energy Aggregation Agreement, More Approved at Alton Committee of the Whole Meeting

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
November 8 2022 11:33 AM



ALTON - The City of Alton Committee of the Whole passed several resolutions at their meeting on Monday night, laying the groundwork for the construction of a flood wall in downtown Alton, approving a new energy aggregation agreement between the City of Alton and Constellation NewEnergy, along with several other items.

Before the committee voted on the resolution concerning the flood wall, several local stakeholders made public comments during the Public Forum addressing City Business. Those individuals were Doug Bader, chair of the Alton Historical Commission, Sara McGibany, executive director of Alton Main Street, Terry Sharp, president of the Alton Landmarks Association, and Jennifer Doody, community engagement and development director for Alton Forward.

“is required to comment on any adverse effect on any historic properties or historic districts that are listed on the national register whenever federal money is involved such as grants for this,” Bader said. “They sent a letter to advising them that the proposed flood wall is within one historic district - the Christian Hill historic district - and adjacent to the downtown extension of the Middletown Historic District.

“In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, they requested that additional stakeholders, including the Alton Historical Commission, the Alton Area Landmarks Association, Alton Main Street, Great Rivers and Routes, AltonWorks, the Alton Riverfront Commission, and two Indian tribes be invited to participate the project.”

He added that the Chicago regional office of FEMA sent a letter to the entities he listed requesting them to be consultants on the project, noting the proposed wall “could obstruct views” of both the Christian Hill historic district and the downtown extension of the Middletown Historic District.

“Flooding is of course a great threat to downtown Alton’s many historic buildings. I know I may not be the only one in the room who helped fill sandbags nearly 30 years ago in the flood of 1993,” Bader continued. “But we do want to make sure that the cure is not worse than the disease - that is, we have to be careful that we don’t build an ugly wall serves to further cordon off downtown ... we’ll have to look at every day for three or four or five years to get 30 days’ use out of it.”

Both McGibany with Alton Main Street and Sharp with the Alton Landmarks Association reiterated their desire to be consultants on the project going forward, while Doody expressed concerns that the project is premature and incompatible with a current U.S. Army Reserve floodplain study of the Alton riverfront. Doody added that the wall would section off downtown Alton from the economic and tourism opportunities of the riverfront, as well as disconnect businesses along 3rd Street from much-needed parking.

After public comments were made, a presentation was given to provide more background on the project and clear up misinformation. The presentation revealed that further consultation with community stakeholders, including many of the groups whose

representatives spoke at tonight's meeting, will take place during the design phase of the project, which will also determine the wall's layout and aesthetic appearance.

After the presentation, a discussion ensued amongst the aldermen. Alderwoman Carolyn MacAfee expressed frustration that the committee wasn't briefed about the project sooner and was unable to discuss it more thoroughly before bringing it to a vote. Given the comments from stakeholders and questions from aldermen surrounding the project, the resolution was amended by Alderman Nathaniel Keener.

The original wording of the flood wall resolution authorized Mayor David Goins to execute an intergovernmental grant agreement between the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the City of Alton for the purpose of constructing "various flood mitigation improvements" described the total project cost as \$5.4 million, "which includes a local match of \$2.9 million" from the Riverfront TIF District account.

The amendment proposed by Keener states that once architectural designs for the project are completed, the Director of Building and Zoning will submit them to the Committee for final approval before proceeding with construction.

The motion to amend the resolution passed with 5 "yes" votes and two "no" votes from Alderwomen Rosetta Brown and Stephanie Elliott. The amended motion was then voted on and also passed with five "yes" votes and two "no" votes, also from Alderwomen Brown and Elliott. This essentially means that the groundwork for the flood mitigation project has been approved, but altered to add final approval from the committee between the design and construction phases.

A resolution authorizing an aggregation agreement between Constellation NewEnergy, Inc. and the City of Alton, with Constellation NewEnergy named as the aggregation supplier, passed unanimously.

Also approved unanimously was the improvement of two streets, Rock Springs Drive and College Avenue, using \$260,000.00 of Motor Fuel Tax Funds. A resolution approving the dedication of a street sign honoring Eddie Mae Harrison on the 500 block of Cherry Street was also unanimously approved.

Two resolutions concerning engineering and construction agreements for Phase 3 of the Safe Routes to School project also passed unanimously, including the improvement of sidewalks along Rock Springs Drive.

The committee also unanimously approved a resolution to commence with demolition proceedings at 414 Spring St., a fire-damaged property.

A resolution authorizing the removal of “no parking” signs on the west side of the 2500 block of Virden St., as well as another resolution for the removal of two handicapped parking spaces at 830 E. 6th St., both passed unanimously.

The committee also unanimously approved a resolution to consider a tax levy ordinance and any tax levy abatement ordinances that may be appropriate for the next fiscal year as recommended by the City Comptroller.

For a full recording of Monday night’s meeting, as well as live coverage of future meetings, visit the [Riverbender.com Facebook page](#).