

Letter from City Administrator Jim Hammond to Fort Ground Homeowners Association rep Terry Godbout re: tree removal from Coeur d'Alene's Dike Road (2.5.15):

Mr. Godbout,

In the discussion regarding the tree removal on the levy protecting NIC and the Fort Grounds homes, the most important issue regarding the levy seems to have fallen to the wayside.

The levy exists to protect the college and adjacent homes from spring high water flooding. After the failure of some levies around the country, the Army Corp of Engineers undertook an effort to ensure the safety/strength of all levies. Should the levy not receive certification, (certification verifies that the condition of the levy is appropriate for flood protection), you as a homeowner would most likely have to buy flood insurance to protect your home as the Fort Grounds would be considered an unprotected flood zone and no federal assistance would be available to rebuild a failed levy.

It's important to remember that the original recommendation from the Army Corp was to remove all vegetation due to its negative effects on the holding strength of the levy.

The City of Coeur d Alene worked with the Corp and the Ruen & Yeager, to preserve at least some of the trees. A commitment in terms of the number of trees to be preserved would not be possible as tree health was only one criteria for tree removal. Restoration of the proper slope on the both sides of the dike also created the need to remove other trees as well as a tree's proximity to other trees to be removed. If the tree were to be partially buried under the slope restoration, it had to be removed as it would not live due to the burial of some of the trunk.

When the city was notified by the Army Corp of Engineers that they would no long provide letters of certification for levies to FEMA, the City issued a contract with Ruen & Yeager to develop a plan to bring the levy back to the standard needed for certification and the City **continues to follow that plan**. Mr. Kasting is a consultant to Ruen and Yeager, not to the City. The City arborist has been involved with city staff in guiding this project.

The City has saved a considerable amount of funds by completing some of the required work in-house, thus avoiding the need for an LID assessment against the Fort Grounds homeowners and saving NIC costs. It is hoped that some of those savings can then be used to further enhance the enjoyment of and access to this part of the lake.

Your letter also cast dispersions upon a particular employee, (an employee endeavoring to rebuild the levy as per specifications) if you have concerns about an employee, please visit privately with either the mayor or me.

The bottom line is that the city wishes to preserve as many trees as possible but the long term stability of the levy as determined by the Army Corp of Engineers will continue to be the chief criteria regarding levy certification. That certification is the important factor for all property protected by the dike. The fact that the City was able to preserve any trees speaks to their desire to meet the neighbors' desires while achieving the most important goal of protecting you and your neighbors from a flood. If I have to choose between a lessor level of protection or a smaller quantity of trees, I will choose to protect you and your neighbors.

Best wishes,

Jim