

LAKE CHARLEVOIX ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENT: BIBCO TERMINAL AT FERRY BEACH

(1) The LCA board was surprised and saddened by the proposal to relocate the Beaver Island Boat Company dock and terminal to the Lake Charlevoix waterfront in the Ferry Beach area. We were troubled that funds were being sought for engineering studies without any public input as to the need or the location. The application seeking funding for an engineering study of the site (not a feasibility study) was approved by the city council at a March meeting with literally no public input. The engineering study sought by the grant application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture rural development funding would have been required as part of an application to EGLE and USACE seeking permission to build a dock and terminal building in an already congested area. This area already sees heavy use both as a public swimming area and as a busy launching ramp for several major marina businesses and the general public.

(2) There was an immediate upwelling of opposition to this idea and LCA was involved in that opposition from the beginning. We reviewed the application seeking grant funding for the project filed by the City of Charlevoix and found that it did not accurately describe the setting in which the proposed ferry facility would be established. The city failed to accurately describe the location by claiming that there was no residential, recreational, transportation, park, open space, shoreline or beach in the area to be developed. In a letter to the regional office of the Department of Agriculture responsible for administering the grant the LCA board made several points about the area. We called attention to the fact that the area is bordered to the west by several substantial residential condominium developments. We noted that the current shoreline is taken up by a large waterways commission launching site used not only by individuals but by a number of commercial marina operations where boats of 60' or more in length are rigged, launched, retrieved and de-rigged. We went on to say that many private users launch substantial boats as well, given the proximity to Lake Michigan. We noted that Ferry Avenue Park, a popular swimming area and one of the few places on Lake Charlevoix where non-riparians can access the lake was adjacent to the launching site. We concluded with the statement that we could not understand how the grant application failed to recognize the true nature of the site. Shortly after our letter was sent, the city announced that it was withdrawing its application for funding the study.

(3) The City of Charlevoix has now established a citizen's committee to evaluate other possible locations for the Beaver Island Boat Company's mainland operation. We believe the decision about locating the ferry operation is one that should be made at a regional level; it is not a matter solely for the city and the boat company. The LCA board intends to maintain a vigilant presence in the community planning process as it unfolds. We are willing to listen to the issues confronting the city and the boat company and to work with them to identify solutions that address their concerns and maintain the ability of our members and the general public to enjoy the shoreline and boating activities at Ferry Beach. LCA has been involved at the board level in the community push back from the very beginning and we intend to remain actively involved as the process emerges.