Wally and Bee’s Resort considered for new county boat launch

County seeks $250K from Richfield to be proposal partner

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RICHFIELD — Village Hall was packed Thursday night to hear a presentation from Washington County officials about the possible construction of a new public boat launch on the current site of Wally and Bee’s Last Stop Resort adjacent to Friess Lake. The launch would be owned and entirely maintained/managed by Washington County.

County Planning and Parks Department Assistant Administrator Debora Sielski told village officials, and a nearly standing room only crowd, that the county would like to demolish all of the structures on the property to construct a formalized public boat launch. The launch will be connected to Glacier Hills Park through a roadway cut into the hill behind where the bar is.

“This is all very preliminary,” Sielski said. “The county estimates the project cost to be around $2 million with 50 percent of the cost we hope to be covered by DNR grants.”

The county’s preliminary design calls for four boat trailer parking spots, an additional handicapped boat trailer parking slot, a fishing pier and an extension of the swim beach.

Village Administrator Jim Healy said the county is asking the village to financially contribute.

“The initial figure they told us (they would seek from the village) in our meeting was one-fourth of the project cost assuming they can win the DNR grants,” Healy said. “For the county’s $36 million budget that number might not be such a big deal, but

David Palmer, husband of owner Ann Palmer, watches a weather report as he sits at the bar at Wally and Bee’s Last Stop Resort on Thursday morning in Hubertus. The tavern sits on the shore of Friess Lake. The business that has been around since 1953 is for sale. David said the building has been around since the 1920s, with the bar being added in 1941. Washington County is interested in purchasing the land the tavern is on to turn the area into a boat launch.

“So frankly, I would be pretty stunned if they didn’t get it,” Healy said.

The resort has been operated since about for several decades, but the current owners, Ann and David Palmer, have had the property for sale for at least two years with an asking price of about $1.3 million-$1.4 million.

“Acquisition of this property has been discussed before. There are four pieces that we would seek to purchase,” Sielski. “For the last 10 years, the (county’s) focus has been on lake access in parks.”

– Debora Sielski
Washington County Planning and Parks Department assistant administrator

Please see BOAT LAUNCH/A8
FROM THE FRONT

Boat launch: Lake access a priority for the county

“The numbers we’ve put together are just estimates,” Sielski said. “We’ve not been able to negotiate with the owners until we meet the DNR’s requirements.”

Sielski said the county has made lake access a priority.

“If a private party buys the property they could decide to cut off the public’s access to the boat launch,” Sielski said. “There is another public boat launch on the lake, but because boats have to pass under a very low bridge many larger boats can’t get to the rest of the lake from there. This new public launch would allow use by boats of all sizes.”

Sielski said they need to know by about Feb. 22 what the village’s decision will be on making a financial contribution to the project.

“Then we’ll apply for the DNR grant in May or June and hopefully hear in August or September if we will receive the money,” Sielski said. “The number of boat-trailer parking stalls is determined by DNR regulations and how large the lake is.”

Sielski said “the project has a long way to go before any construction is started.” She said Thursday night’s presentation was conducted so the county could hear questions from the public and outline the project so the Village Board could make a decision within approximately the next month. Village President John Jeffords said the presentation answered many of his questions.

“I appreciate the county asking Richfield to participate,” Jeffords said. “I think this is a commendable project, but the board has to discuss how it could finance such a contribution. We’ve already passed our 2017 budget and there’s no allocation in the budget for this. A contribution of this size needs to have questions answered about the timing and how much we could afford.”

ABOVE: The exterior of Wally and Bee’s Last Stop Resort seen on Thursday morning in Hubertus. The business that has been around since 1953 is for sale. Washington County is interested in purchasing the land the tavern is on to turn the area into a boat launch. BELOW: From left, a photograph from 1941 of owner Ann Palmer’s parents Walter Holoubek and Bernadine Radermacher with great-uncle John Radermacher, grandmother Anna Radermacher, great-uncle Gerold Radermacher and great-uncle David Radermacher, taken in the bar area at Wally and Bee’s Last Stop Resort is seen on Thursday morning at Wally and Bee’s