

TOWNSHIP OF CROCKERY
COUNTY OF OTTAWA, MICHIGAN

At a regular meeting of the Township Board of the Township of Crockery, held in the Township Hall, Nunica, Michigan, on the 9th day of April, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Stille, Buchanan, Constantine and Suchecki

ABSENT: Van Bemmelen

The following preamble and resolution was offered by Member Constantine and supported by Member Suchecki.

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-12

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE PROPOSED GRAND RIVER WATERWAY
DREDGING PROJECT**

WHEREAS, developer Dan Hibma, operating under the name of the “Grand River Waterway Organization,” has commissioned certain reports, feasibility studies and economic benefit studies, for the purpose of pursuing and promoting the so-called Grand River Waterway (“GRW”) Project (*see* <http://www.grandriverwaterway.com/>);

WHEREAS, the GRW Project would involve the dredging of an approximately 22.5-mile stretch of the Grand River, extending from the Bass River inlet near Eastmanville, upstream to the Fulton Street bridge in Grand Rapids, for the purpose of making this stretch of the River safe for shallow-draft navigation for watercraft up to 49 feet in length, by the creation of a 50-foot wide, seven-foot deep channel;

WHEREAS, the feasibility studies and other reports commissioned by the Grand River Waterway Organization have projected that the initial dredging project would require expenditures of public monies in the amount of approximately \$2.2 million, followed by ongoing dredging and maintenance cost of approximately \$170,000 per year;

WHEREAS, the entire southern boundary of Crockery Township abuts the Grand River, along the stretch that is generally immediately downstream from the GRW Project area;

WHEREAS, the Township Board of the Township of Crockery has considered the costs and possible benefits of the GRW Project, along with the impacts it would have on the public and private lands abutting the Grand River in Crockery Township, the quality of the Grand River ecosystem, and upon residents in Crockery Township; and,

WHEREAS, the Township Board of the Township of Crockery has determined that it would not be advisable nor in the public interest to implement the proposed GRW Project because of the following negative consequences and concerns:

- The GRW Project is being promoted primarily by one individual, Dan Hibma, who owns property in Kent County that he wants to develop with a large marina that would have access to Lake Michigan via the Grand River. This narrow private interest should not override the many negative consequences and costs of the project, as listed below.
- The project would place additional unfunded liabilities on local units of government. For example, the cost of patrolling the river and handling emergency rescue service would fall on local governments. In addition, local governments would incur additional costs for removal of trees, debris and obstructions from the dredged channel.
- Currently, there is no agency with funds budgeted to handle the annual dredging that would be required to maintain the channel. The project should not proceed until there is an agency with dedicated funds for this purpose.

- Approximately 450 additional buoys would need to be installed and maintained in the expanded channel, for which the Coast Guard would have no responsibility because the buoys would be outside of the Corps of Engineer navigational channel. This is another cost and burden that would be placed on state or local governments.
- Impacts on the overall ecology of the River and its wildlife could be negative. The River has an abundance of fish and mussel species that would be negatively affected by the dredging project.
- The additional boat wakes in the dredged area will likely cause increased damage and erosion to the banks of the River, both along public and private property.
- Wetlands adjacent to the River could suffer lower water conditions during drier seasons, and thus negatively affect their ecological quality.
- There are concerns that dredging a meandering channel in the bottom could result in dramatic changes to the hydrology and flow of the river, with potential negative consequence for property owners both within and downstream of the dredged area.
- Dredging could disturb and release contaminated sediments that could also contaminate downstream portions of the River. The disposing of contaminated sediments has not been factored into the project costs.
- The existing River situation has provided a good balance of recreational opportunities, with large boats having use of Lake Michigan, Spring Lake and the Grand River, up to the Bass River Recreation Area; with quieter, less-impacting watercraft, such as small fishing boats, pontons, and kayaks, having access to the

upper reaches of the River. The private interests of one landowner/developer should not upset this existing balance.

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Township Board of the Township of Crockery does not support, and hereby formally opposes, the proposed GRW Project.

2. The Township Supervisor is hereby authorized and directed to provide a copy of this resolution to the federal, state and county legislators representing Crockery Township, and to such other government agencies or officers involved with consideration of the GRW Project.

AYES: Stille, Buchanan, Constantine and Suchecki

NAYS: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Kathleen Buchanan, Clerk
Township of Crockery