



For Immediate Release
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Lawsuit Filed Against Milwaukee County Board for Violating Open Meetings Law Meeting changed County's position from removal to repair of Estabrook Dam.

MILWAUKEE — On January 29th, 2015 the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Committee on Finance, Personnel and Audit held a regular meeting during which they took up and considered the issue of the Estabrook dam without proper notice as required by the Wisconsin Open meetings law. Milwaukee Riverkeeper is filing a lawsuit against the Finance Committee for failure to properly notify the public.

The lawsuit alleges that Supervisors violated the Wisconsin open meeting procedure and law by not listing on the agenda nor on public notices that a potential change in Estabrook Dam policy would be considered in advance of the January 29, 2015 meeting. Further, the lawsuit contends that the Board failed to provide the public with an appropriate amount of time to weigh in and testify about the change.

“There was no notice given about where this meeting would be held or when,” said Jennifer Bolger Breceda, Executive Director of Milwaukee Riverkeeper. “As a result, the public was unable to participate in the discussion. This violates the law and any decisions made during this meeting must be legally nullified.”

On the agenda for the meeting was consideration of a funding package for all capital projects for Milwaukee County for the entire year. Supervisor Theo Lipscomb expanded the scope of the package with an amendment that made a total policy change for the County, one that flipped its position from removal to repair of the Estabrook Dam. This was particularly troubling because the whole County Board had agreed to pursue removal only two months earlier.

The amendment was presented to the County Board in such a way that board members were under the impression that a vote against this single amendment would be a vote against all funding for all projects in the county for the year.

“This carefully crafted situation manipulated the County Board proceedings and ignored public opinion that overwhelmingly supports removal of the dam.” said Jennifer Bolger Breceda.



The goal of the lawsuit is to ensure that if the County Board decides to change the policy, it is taken up in a fair and open manner with an opportunity for public involvement, as the law requires.

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