

## Lake Williams neighborhood endorses tax district proposal

By SUSANN VIAFORA  
Staff Writer

LEBANON - The results of a recently-completed survey of the Lake Williams Beach Association members indicate that most members approve, in principle, of establishing a special tax district to pay for the purchase of the lake.

A public hearing will be held sometime in late October to gain formal endorsement of the proposal to bring before the town Flood and Erosion Control Board, the only agency authorized to establish such a tax district.

According to the poll, which was mailed to 137 LWBA members and other lakeside property owners last month by LWBA president Kent Sleath, 50 of the 64 LWBA respondents said they would support the establishment of a tax district under certain conditions, while 14 respondents were against the proposal altogether. In addition, 14 of the 20 respondents who are not LWBA members, but who would be part of the tax district, said they would support the proposal, Sleath said last week.

"There is support, but again, some of these issues need to be resolved before any tax district is a final reality," Sleath said last week, adding that overall reaction was "basically favorable" to the tax district proposal.

"But that's with a lot of faith that we'll come up with an equitable solution," he said.

The tax district was proposed last spring by First Selectman Richard Bauwens, but the idea was greeted with strong vocal opposition from LWBA and flood panel members alike. Both groups had hoped residents would agree to pay the town's share of the purchase price, via a one-time 4.6 mill equal tax supplement, but voters turned down that proposal by a near 4-1 margin at an Aug. 2 referendum.

Bauwens and other town officials acknowledge that the LWBA itself would be hard-pressed to pay the town's entire \$426,667 share of the purchase price. Under the special tax district plan, district members would pay about half that share, or \$213,333, while residents in general would be asked to contribute the remaining half.

The state Department of Environmental Protection would contribute the remaining one-third of the \$640,000 purchase price. The state would also repair the lake dam, and buy about 11 acres of land on both the east and west shore of the lake for dam maintenance and construction of a public boat launch and picnic facility.

Bauwens presented a breakdown of estimated tax district assessments and the mill rate impact upon those who would belong to the district at an LWBA picnic Sept. 25. Last week, he pointed out that those who responded to the survey were not yet aware of just how much they would be expected to pay.

"To get that kind of positive response, kind of shows the desperation they feel they're in," Bauwens said. "They signed support on a blank check."

The data Bauwens presented Sept. 25 shows that the projected grand list would generate about \$2 million in revenues from 214 tax district members. With one mill in the tax district equal to \$2,034, district members would pay 15.24 mills each year during a 10-year amortized bond, based on an eight percent bond rate.

On a 15-year bond, at the eight percent rate, members would be liable for 12.01 mills, or 10.51 mills a year under a 20-year bond. If the interest rate is set at nine percent, members would pay 15.91 mills a year for 10 years, 12.74 mills annually for 15 years or 11.30 mills each year for 20 years.

"These estimates were purposely done on the high side, so we won't be coming back later with any surprises," Bauwens said.

Bauwens said most potential tax district members own between \$15,000 and \$25,000 in assessed property; therefore, most would pay under \$300 a year. Some, owners of undeveloped lots, would be liable for only \$3.68 a year under a 20-year, eight percent bond, while the highest tax, or \$756.72 a year, would be levied on campground owners Leigh and Sandra Rider.

Those assessments would be in addition

(Continued on Page 26)

## ► Lake Williams

(Continued from Page 1)

to the approximate 2.3 town-based mill all residents would pay toward their share of the purchase.

Bauwens also stressed that, if the tax district is approved, it would be under the proviso that it be dissolved after the bond has been paid for.

"The intent of this is strictly for the purchase of Lake Williams, and it is my intent that it would be dissolved soon after that," Bauwens said.

Opposition to the plan, set before up 90 persons at the Sept. 25 meeting was "very, very minimal," Bauwens said. Primary concerns voiced at the meeting included the termination of the district after the bond has been repaid, and whether

the state could be prevented from asking for additional funds if, say, the dam repair costs more than anticipated.

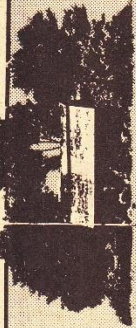
Bauwens said that attorneys will work to draw up the tax district agreement so that those concerns could be addressed.

"All in all, I left that meeting knowing those people were supporting our project," Bauwens said.

"It was a good turnout," Sleath agreed, adding that much of the opposition voiced at the meeting came from elderly lakeside residents who would be hard-pressed to pay any additional sum.

"This thing is going to be a hardship on them," he said. "They would like to have a lake back, but it's going to be hard."

"It was not a giant step (toward a settlement), but a good step forward."



# Lebanon

## State attorney general nixes Lake Williams tax district plan

By SUSANN VIAFORA  
Staff Writer

LEBANON - Finding a way to save Lake Williams will be high on the town's list of New Year's resolutions.

Officials must now seek an alternate way to pay for the lake, after the state attorney general affirmed town counsel's opinion that the Flood and Erosion Control Board does not have the statutory authority to create a special tax district among lake area residents and property owners. The plan, proposed by First Selectman Richard Bauwens, had been for about 214 prospective members of the special district to pay half of the town's \$426,667 share of the lake purchase price. All town residents would have been called on to pay the remaining half of that share, while the state would have contributed \$213,333 toward the purchase, repair the lake dam, and buy up to 11 acres of land for dam maintenance and lakeside recreational facilities.

But now, Bauwens said, those 214 members would have to volunteer to form a tax district. Or, another method must be found to try and solve the decade-long stalemate over lake maintenance, ownership and use

"These people can, apparently, establish a taxing district of their own if they so desire," Bauwens said last week.

"If they can form their own taxing district, we may still look for a dual effort from the taxing district and the community. I still don't think a taxing district could be made large enough to be affordable (to each member)."

Both Bauwens and Kent Sleath, president of the 117-member Lake Williams Beach Association, believe some sort of taxing district is necessary, after residents voted by a near 4-1 margin last August not to pay a one-time, 4.6-mill tax supplement to pay for the lake.

Since that time, lake area property owners have begun to express more support for a tax district. A survey conducted last fall by Sleath indicates that the majority of area residents do not object to the idea, at least in principle.

Sleath said last week that larger property owners, such as Grand Lake Spa and Leigh J. Rider's campground on Route 207, and would agree to form a tax district. "The major players are willing to form a tax district ... and we've had good support on the west side of the lake."

But about 15 others are elderly persons living on fixed incomes, Sleath added,

*"As we keep going and going, and these obstacles keep coming our way, we just regroup and find a different vehicle to solve the problem."*

- Richard Bauwens  
Lebanon First  
Selectman

population, our homeowners. It's not an affluent area."

Both Sleath and Bauwens said they will wait for the state attorney general's recommended alternatives before proceeding any further. But when asked if he thought the ruling was a setback for those working toward a solution, Bauwens noted that several flood and erosion panel members had vocally opposed the plan and would not have voted to create the district had they been empowered to do so.

"I (thought it was a setback) at first," Bauwens said, "but I think as we keep going and going, and these obstacles keep coming our way, we just regroup and find a different vehicle to solve the problem."

"The attitude the FECB showed on that proposal, I'm not sure it's a setback anyway."

"Not really, no," Sleath agreed. "It's just one alternative that we have to cross off the list. I really don't see it as a setback - it would have been an easy solution, but it's not the only solution."

Regardless of which path officials pursue to resolve the stalemate, Bauwens said no one group can be expected to shoulder the entire burden.

"I think it's truly going to take a three-way effort between the taxing district, the town and the state."



State of Connecticut  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONN. 06106

REPRESENTATIVE RONALD L. SMOKO  
NINETY-FIRST DISTRICT

97 URSINI DRIVE  
HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06514

Lake Williams  
CHAIRMAN  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE  
MEMBER  
BANKS COMMITTEE  
STATE BOND COMMISSION

October 11, 1988

Leslie Carothers, Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection  
State Office Building, Room 117  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Carothers:

On Thursday, October 5th, we met with residents from the Lake Williams area regarding the proposal which they have been asked to participate in as we work to bring this long time problem at Lake Williams to resolution.

As you probably already know, Lebanon residents, by a 4 to 1 vote at referendum on August 2nd, rejected participation in the plan which would place the taxing burden (\$426,000) on the shoulders of approximately 150 residents who live in immediate proximity to the Lake.

Should this proposal be forced upon the residents, it would result in a financial burden of up to \$1,260 annually for some residents if this were amortized over a ten year period. Considering the large financial burden that these people would have to assume ( a good many are seniors living on fixed incomes), we are asking that you give serious consideration to increasing the state's financial participation in the plan. If statutory authority does not exist to allow you to increase the state's funding, legislation may be necessary.

There were other concerns which also need addressing: 1) What guarantees will be conveyed to participating residents? 2) Are these residents to be deeded water rights? 3) The Flood