

WSSA News Release – Jan. 18, 2013

Residents on Bellevue lakes are holding their breath as the City moves to stage 2 in updating the City shoreline management program (or SMP as it's called by those following the issue.) Among interested parties is Bellevue-based WA Sensible Shorelines Association (WSSA). Its members have been actively involved in the process, now in its third year.

WSSA board member Martin Nizlek, a retired engineer who lives on Lake Sammamish, noted that while Bellevue's SMP update has been a lengthy process, the extensive amount of development along City shorelines has warranted this.

Nizlek noted what could have been a contentious debate was resolved when City staff proposed a unique approach. Staff suggested using a City regulation pertaining to front yards; one requiring 50% to be greenery. "They suggested applying it to shorelines on the three city lakes – Sammamish, Lake WA, and Phantom Lake near Eastgate. When the Planning Commission saw the merits of staffs' suggestion; a subcommittee spent a month perfecting the concept. The result of the committee effort was unanimous approval by the seven member commission," according to Nizlek.

"WSSA's understanding of Wednesday night's meeting outcome, " Nizlek noted, "is that making changes within 50 feet of Bellevue lake shores will require property owners to assure the 50% landscaping standard is met." He added, "This is consistent with requirements that have been approved by the State Dept. of Ecology in neighboring jurisdictions; but, as important, existing development would be protected under the plan."

Another hurdle, resolved late in the process, that's been a concern to residents, is shoreline protection, where concrete bulkheads have been placed along many properties. "There's been a push to remove these and replace them with logs and rocks," Nizlek pointed out. "Today's shorelines are subjected to heavy wave action from wind and boats, and we've been concerned about erosion polluting the lakes and causing other property losses," he added. "We're pleased that a decision was made to allow professionals, such as hydraulic engineers, to evaluate if this is feasible on a case-by-case basis."

The SMP will now go to the City Council for review, then to the Department of Ecology, where it will be reviewed and recommendations made back to the City.