

THE AMERICAN LEGION



Granite Falls American Legion Post 69
60 6th Avenue
Granite Falls, MN 56241

February 27, 2019

Re: Easement for portage on west side of the legion building.

On Tuesday, February 26th, the members of Legion Post 69 had their regular monthly member meeting where part of the discussion was to determine if the members would agree to allow for an easement on the west alley way of the legion property as a public canoe/kayak portage. Many of the members were not fully aware of the river project details that are being pursued, but generally everyone was in agreement that the project had merit. In fact, many agreed that the long range goals of this project aligned nicely with the 5 and 10 year strategic plan that the legion has developed. Even with the general agreement on the merits of the river project, the members decided to not grant an easement. The details of decision are outlined below.

Liability – By granting an easement, the legion would expose itself to liability. Even though it was agreed that the liability exposure would be minimal, in today's climate of litigation, it was not an exposure the legion was willing to accept.

Alternatives – During a February citizens organization meeting, an alternative portage route to a landing on the east side of the river was discussed. During the citizens meeting, the alternate route option seemed agreeable and the members of the legion agreed that it would be a viable solution. It was felt that the alternative route would not degrade the functionality or enjoyment of river canoers/kayakers.

Communication and Approach – The issue that finally brought our group to its final decision was one that also had full consensus from our group. This came from my report to our members of the February 20th discussion that the sub-committee to address the portage had and specifically relates to comments that Patrick Moore made during that February 20th sub-committee meeting. I can only paraphrase the comments that were made:

During the sub-committee meeting, Patrick Moore stated that he has a high degree of retail experience and the way to make the project work is to communicate and sell the project to the community. Yet before it was known that the proposed portage would cross private property he took a different path. Instead of communicating with the American Legion about how this may affect, or benefit us, he left us with the impression that our opinion is irrelevant. During our membership meeting the question of if he is willing to push his agenda without thoughts of how that will affect others, what will he try to do if we do grant easement? Once this was brought up, our discussion came to an immediate halt and a quick consensus to not grant an easement was made.

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I will also say that our member discussion did not immediately gravitate to opposing the easement. In fact, there was plenty of discussion on both sides: are we potentially in a position to gain that will outweigh the long term liability that an easement will create. I need to be explicitly clear that the members of the American Legion do not oppose the project of improving the river's recreational possibilities, but rather we oppose the low level of integrity that was exhibited when the approach was to not bother engaging in communication when the personal agenda deemed it not necessary.

This letter is to act as the official response from the American Legion about granting an easement during the March 1 meeting. I have work duties that will not allow me to attend that meeting. I was directed by our members to formulate and deliver this response. This letter does express the decision of our members, however, the tone, context and is entirely my own.

Regards,

Dorian Gatchell

Dorian Gatchell,
American Legion Post 69