

Dia Hunter's Town Council Meeting Statement

Unbeknownst to me, last night I was informed that some comments were made on social media regarding my role in bringing an agenda item forward to tonight's meeting. This came as a shock to me because I did not receive a single phone call from anyone asking why I choose to add an agenda item to tonight's meeting. To bring clarity to my actions I owe it this council and the citizens of Tyrone to explain why I have executed my right as stated in our charter to bring an issue back to agenda. Before directly addressing this issue, I would love to provide a little context so please bear with me for a second. In September, we the Council received a message from our town manager, Brandon Perkins stating that he was just informed that there might be an issue at Shamrock Park related to the trees that were located on top of the earthen dam. He informed us that an engineer doing unrelated work in the area noticed an issue and informed the Town Engineer, Scott Langford of the perceived problem. Scott then notified Brandon, and the Mayor and Council were made aware of the potential issue.

Shortly thereafter I discussed this issue with Councilman Campbell at the hardware store where I told him that I did not want the trees in Shamrock Park removed. Later that day, I also informed Brandon that I love the park, I love the trees, and I don't want to see trees taken down in the park. Brandon stated at the time that he is gathering as much information as possible to provide to Council as it relates to the perceived problem.

A few days later Brandon stated to Council that he consulted with additional engineers and gathered data from several organizations that oversee dam safety, and he reached out to our town attorney, Dennis Davenport. As a result of Mr. Perkin's findings, we determined the following information to be both factual and true.

- Trees do not belong on earthen dams.
- The root structure of trees on dams could compromise the structural integrity of the dam.
- A breach could potentially cause damage to both public and private property including but not limited to the CSX railway.
- A study would have to be conducted to ascertain the potential risks of a dam failure. This amount for the study was estimated as over 40K.
- Our insurance no longer covers dam damage, and it is capped at 2 million in liability.

As a Council we asked our Town Engineer to provide an estimate of the potential cost of mitigating the risk of a dam breach. (This estimate includes removing those trees on the dam and pressure grouting the voids left behind when the roots are removed. Scott's conservative estimate was a little over \$166K.)

In our last meeting, we were trying to make a motion for our town engineer to entertain request for proposals (rfp's) from multiple companies that specialize in this type of work to gain a more accurate cost for mitigation. One of our Councilmembers was out for personal reasons and a motion was made by me to proceed with the process of getting that cost data back to Council and my motion was seconded by Council member Whelan. When the votes were tallied Council member Campbell was the sole no in the vote. The purpose of asking for the item to be brought back to agenda was to give Council member Furr an opportunity to cast her vote as her vote represents 1/4 of Tyrone the same as each of ours. For the record, I want to say that even though I initially wanted the trees to stay I personally could never choose the aesthetics of trees over the safety of our citizens and the financial future of our town. As I was made aware of those social media statements some citizens asked why now what's the urgency. I would like to offer an analogy for this situation. When you go to the dentist office, and you are informed that you have a cavity. The dentist tells you that they can fill that cavity for 80 dollars. You have the money to fill the cavity, but you decide to do nothing. One day you wake up in the middle of the night in excruciating pain and must put in an emergency call to your dentist for the next day. You end up having to have a root canal that costs you much more than those 80 bucks. From a financial perspective we have a line item for dam maintenance that would cover the cost that was funded by a previous SPLOST which in short means that any person that contributed to our SPLOST would be assisting in paying for this hazard mitigation in other words Tyrone taxpayers would not be solely responsible for the financial burden of mitigation. We don't have access to SPLOST money if there is a fallen tree and/or dam breach and we as citizens of Tyrone would have to pay for direct costs related to any damage from our general fund which pays for our law enforcement officers, administrative staff and public works personnel. Doing nothing about this issue has a cost and I believe that cost is more than we should bear as a town.

Ladies and Gentlemen this is not a vote to remove trees this is a vote to gather cost data for potential tree removal from the earthen dam. Whether or not we have yays or nays I personally believe that we were elected to gather as much factual data as possible and make informed decisions that do not always reflect our own personal opinions but to make the best decision possible for our town. I conclude with one question for my fellow council members. Do you choose the aesthetics of trees on top of an earthen dam over the safety and financial future of our town?