

Dear Sherwood Forest Property Owner,

The special town meeting scheduled for Saturday, November 22, 2008 includes an article allowing for the creation of the Sherwood Forest Lake District for purposes including the repairing and maintaining of the dams and waterways within Sherwood Forest.

This is an urgent matter requiring your support. Massachusetts requires that all dams be inspected. Based on a November 2006 inspection of Little Robin Dam, the Office of Dam Safety, a Massachusetts agency, determined that it is in need of immediate repair and is mandating that it either be repaired or breached and removed. Their mandate, called a "Certificate of Non-Compliance and Dam Safety Order" was dated February 22, 2008 and required further inspections and repair work by specific dates. The anticipated cost of repair has been estimated at \$150,000 and breaching would be about \$100,000. Certain key benchmark dates have already been missed due to lack of funds.

While requests for voluntary contributions and pledges were answered (thanks to all who did pledge) they were not sufficient to meet the anticipated expenses. Funds are simply not available from the State or Federal governments and the State has already warned that significant fines are to be levied. If we do not repair our dams, the State can and will step in and may very well breach the dams to avoid further maintenance or repairs by the State in the future.

If the dams were breached, it would have a severely negative impact on the assessed values on or near the lakes, which would affect not only the rest of the forest but the entire town. Since off-water land is currently assessed at about 1/8 the value of on-water land, it is projected that the assessed value of the on-water land would drop by about \$14 million or about 19% of the total assessed value in Sherwood Forest. This would cause an estimated shortfall in property tax receipts of \$275,000 per year. This shortfall would be spread over the rest of the town property owners in order to maintain the Town's operations. The impact on owners within the Sherwood Forest Road District would be even greater. Not only would property taxes increase on non-lakefront properties, but a shortfall in the road district budget would also occur for the same reasons and be spread over only those within the road district rather than the entire town.

If the proposed Lake District is created, the majority of the costs would be paid by lake-front property owners due to their higher tax assessments. Non lake-front owners would pay significantly less and in addition, the costs for all owners would be spread out over time.

Although all property owners within the forest have easement rights to use the lakes, it is recognized that not all non lakefront residents use the lakes or beaches nor want to. For those persons, the proposed act allows them to 'opt-out' of the district and avoid paying district taxes by releasing their easement rights. Careful thought should be given to such action as the amount of tax for such a property owner could very well be minimal as compared to the eventual impact on their property value by releasing their easement rights.

Many of us are raising a third generation in Sherwood Forest and want the benefits of our lake community to be available to them and future generations. Please support this Lake District act and vote favorably on it at the town meeting on November 22, 2008. The proposed act is available on the Town's web site for your review.

Thank you,

The Dam Committee