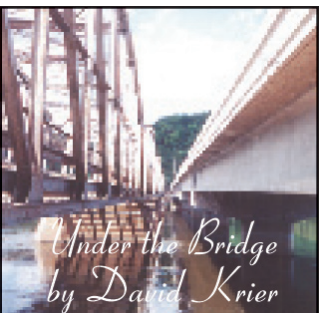


IN YOUR DIAL

Stingrays Section 1, Pg. 3
Blues Fest this weekend Section 1, Pg. 4
Voyageur canoe trips Section 2, Pg. 1

The Boscobel Dial

VOL. 150—NO. 30 BOSCOBEL, WISCONSIN THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022 \$45 PER YEAR IN WISCONSIN, SINGLE COPY \$1.25



IT'S COOLER NEAR THE LAKE... I was reminded of the powerful, and refreshing, impact of Lake Michigan on the landscape during a road trip to Port Washington the weekend of June 23-24. As usual, it was coast-to-coast east on Highway 60 from Boscobel to the Big Pond. But before I got within 40 miles of the lake, I felt its cooling relief. With all the windows down in the Mighty Mountaineer and the 360 "air" on, the temperature read 87 degrees at mid-afternoon. But leaving Hartford the temperature suddenly dropped 10, then 15 degrees.

~July 5, 2012

THE WIND was blowing strong out of the east, hence the long-distance lake effect. Such is not the case when hot, dry wind blows in from the southwest, as has been the case the past week and a half. But what a relief that easterly breeze is, and a boon for salmon anglers. Entering Port Washington I headed straight for the marina and a check with the local charter boat captains, who are enjoying one of their most successful seasons in recent memory. A group aboard the Foxy Lady was disembarking as I drove up and when they pulled the coolers off the boat—which proved to be a challenge—they were filled with Chinook salmon in the 10-15 pound range stacked like cordwood.

~July 5, 2012

A SCORCHER... We're all glad last week's oppressive heat wave has passed, at least for now. We can't remember a week as hot as that one, including at least three days with temperatures in triple digits, including 105 on the Fourth of July. No wonder this year's parade and park crowd was way down. We were on vacation last week, but might as well have been working in air conditioned comfort, because it was too hot to do much of anything else, especially outside.

~July 12, 2012

THE MIDDLE AGES returned to Boscobel last weekend in the form of Warriors and Warlords, a re-enactment of pre-17th century Europe that has called Kronshage Park its home for one weekend in mid-July for the past five years. We heard a few grumbings from local residents about the "freaks" that had taken over the park for the weekend, but for the most part, locals have come to accept the event for what it is: an opportunity for people to travel back in time if just for one weekend, much like the Boscobel's annual Civil War Weekend the first weekend in August.

~July 19, 2012

Most people are more comfortable with old problems than with new solutions.

~Author unknown



Debris dams are one of the possible scenarios of why the creek is seeing a rising water level. Pictured is Sanders Creek on the west side of Highway 61 in DNR marshland property. It is also thought that the creek is losing its channel and that its bed might be filling in with sediment. Drone photo courtesy of Kurt Hoepfer

Boscobel's Sanders Creek on the rise

By **CHANDLER BRINDLEY**

It has been close to two months since Lora Roling launched her public effort to clean out Sanders Creek. And in that time, she's been puzzled about rising water levels in the creek. "I live right by the creek," she said. "The sidewalk is always flooding down there. People were saying that it is the beavers, or the fish, or that you cannot go on Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land. I am the kind of person that says, 'You know what? I need to find out for myself. I need to know.'" She's not alone. Turns out officials at the DNR and the City of Boscobel have been scratching their heads over the same question for several years.

Downstream blockages One possibility is that dead trees and garbage are damming the creek downstream from the flooded area. In 2019, the DNR flew a drone over the marsh and discovered one such blockage about 200 feet downstream of the box culvert on Highway 61, according to Andy Barta, environment analysis specialist with the department.

"This was likely debris that had washed out of the flood plain and downstream during one of the mini flooding events that the creek has experienced recently," Barta said.

After the blockage was discovered, the DNR and the City of Boscobel began discussing a land-use agreement, which was made formal in June 2020, according to Barta. The terms of the agreement gave the city access to the state lands west of Highway 61 to "dislodge and remove the debris using camping tools as best they could," he said. Boscobel City Engineer/Director of Public Works Mike Reynolds was part of that effort. "Me and some other guys went downstream and spent almost a day just cutting out the debris piles that were holding the water back," Reynolds said. "You could see that it is only a matter of time before the next tree falls down and begins to block the water." According to Barta, the water dropped about five inches after the blockage was removed. "There is not a real defined stream channel out through the marshland," Barta said. "There is also more debris as you go farther out and follow the creek. To my knowledge there are no in-depth surveys from anybody that has gone out there and fully investigated and shot water levels to really help interpret what the real cause is."

Another theory of Reynolds' is that the box culvert on Highway 61 is too small. "Every time we get a heavy flood event, the box culvert blocks the water up and the water begins to travel north along the east side of the highway," he said. Reynolds explained that there are two types of streams: A cutting stream with a steep gradient that sweeps away sediment during floods, versus a settling stream, which Reynolds said he thinks might describe Sanders Creek. "When the water gets slowed down as it enters the box culvert, all the sediment settles down. So, it could be that it is raising the stream bed," he said. If that's the case, dredging the creek bottom could solve the problem. "We would need the correct permits from the DNR to do something like," Reynolds said. "I do not think that we would explore that option until we absolutely knew that soil and sediment were

Additional cuts found City Commission gives thumbs-up to boat landing

By **JOE HART**

Full steam ahead! That was the vote from Boscobel's Boat Landing Commission, which assembled at a hastily planned meeting ahead of next week's City Council vote on the proposed upgrade to the landing. The group voted unanimously to recommend that the council move forward with the project, in spite of cost overruns. The vote came after the commission heard that Director of Public Works/City Engineer Mike Reynolds had found additional cuts that brought the price tag of the city's portion of the project down to \$596,000—about \$75,000 over the original planned budget of \$521,000. Adjusted for inflation, (and that's a big adjustment these days), that amounts to approximately five percent overbudget. Most of the cost of the \$1.2 million project will be covered by Department of Natural Resources grants totaling \$831,000. The city's portion of the cost includes \$200,000 for engineering costs, most of which has already been spent. "If we walk away from this, we're walking away from a million dollars. You've spent \$160,000 already on engineer-

ing. You've got \$830,000 in grants," Reynolds told the commission. Additional grant money is available to help defray the cost of inflation, should Boscobel apply and qualify for it. **Bought for a buck** The idea for the boat landing dates to 2015, when Boscobel's then-mayor Steve Wetter jokingly offered to buy it from Grant County. "They have 11 boat landings, and like they told me, they're not boat landing people. They just don't know anything about boat landings," Wetter said. "Supposedly, they had \$11,000, and each one got \$1,000 dollars. Well, the \$1,000 don't do very much." Wetter said he was in a meeting with the county board chair and the county attorney in 2015. "I was just joking, and I said, 'Why don't you guys just sell it to us for a buck?'" They looked at each other and they said, 'I think that'd be a fine idea.' And that's how it all started was right there." The concept, according to Wetter, was to build improvements to the landing that would both serve local

Worker and housing shortages hamper Boscobel area growth

By **JOE HART**

The local worker shortage came to a head over the July 4 holiday weekend at Boscobel's Wisconsin Secure Program Facility (WSPF). The prison was so short-handed that Warden Gary Boughton had to pull a couple of shifts on the housing unit over the weekend. "We had it covered going into the weekend," he said. But last-minute sick leave left the staff stretched. Boughton took half-shifts on Saturday and Sunday to ensure that no-one patrolled the housing unit alone, he said. "All I am is another pair of eyes and ears." Across Boscobel's leading employers, similar stories reverberate. The worker shortage that is impacting the rest of the U.S. is also affecting local businesses. The coffee-klatch explanation for the so-called Great Resignation is that "no-one wants to work anymore." But among the factors impacting the local worker shortage are changes in Boscobel's population dynamics, Pethan said. The population is shrinking and the percentage of people over 65 is growing. In 2010, the city's median age was 34, and 13 percent of the population was over 65, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). By 2020, the median age had risen to 44, and 20 percent of the population was over 65. "Typically, you see a rapid decline in participation in the labor pool after 65," said Pethan. In other words, Boscobel needs to retain and recruit younger workers to solve the labor shortage. The major obstacle to doing so is a lack of housing. Brisbois said that his top concern right now is housing that's affordable on working-

ing. You've got \$830,000 in grants," Reynolds told the commission. Additional grant money is available to help defray the cost of inflation, should Boscobel apply and qualify for it. **Bought for a buck** The idea for the boat landing dates to 2015, when Boscobel's then-mayor Steve Wetter jokingly offered to buy it from Grant County. "They have 11 boat landings, and like they told me, they're not boat landing people. They just don't know anything about boat landings," Wetter said. "Supposedly, they had \$11,000, and each one got \$1,000 dollars. Well, the \$1,000 don't do very much." Wetter said he was in a meeting with the county board chair and the county attorney in 2015. "I was just joking, and I said, 'Why don't you guys just sell it to us for a buck?'" They looked at each other and they said, 'I think that'd be a fine idea.' And that's how it all started was right there." The concept, according to Wetter, was to build improvements to the landing that would both serve local

Worker and housing shortages hamper Boscobel area growth

By **JOE HART**

The local worker shortage came to a head over the July 4 holiday weekend at Boscobel's Wisconsin Secure Program Facility (WSPF). The prison was so short-handed that Warden Gary Boughton had to pull a couple of shifts on the housing unit over the weekend. "We had it covered going into the weekend," he said. But last-minute sick leave left the staff stretched. Boughton took half-shifts on Saturday and Sunday to ensure that no-one patrolled the housing unit alone, he said. "All I am is another pair of eyes and ears." Across Boscobel's leading employers, similar stories reverberate. The worker shortage that is impacting the rest of the U.S. is also affecting local businesses. The coffee-klatch explanation for the so-called Great Resignation is that "no-one wants to work anymore." But among the factors impacting the local worker shortage are changes in Boscobel's population dynamics, Pethan said. The population is shrinking and the percentage of people over 65 is growing. In 2010, the city's median age was 34, and 13 percent of the population was over 65, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). By 2020, the median age had risen to 44, and 20 percent of the population was over 65. "Typically, you see a rapid decline in participation in the labor pool after 65," said Pethan. In other words, Boscobel needs to retain and recruit younger workers to solve the labor shortage. The major obstacle to doing so is a lack of housing. Brisbois said that his top concern right now is housing that's affordable on working-

ing. You've got \$830,000 in grants," Reynolds told the commission. Additional grant money is available to help defray the cost of inflation, should Boscobel apply and qualify for it. **Bought for a buck** The idea for the boat landing dates to 2015, when Boscobel's then-mayor Steve Wetter jokingly offered to buy it from Grant County. "They have 11 boat landings, and like they told me, they're not boat landing people. They just don't know anything about boat landings," Wetter said. "Supposedly, they had \$11,000, and each one got \$1,000 dollars. Well, the \$1,000 don't do very much." Wetter said he was in a meeting with the county board chair and the county attorney in 2015. "I was just joking, and I said, 'Why don't you guys just sell it to us for a buck?'" They looked at each other and they said, 'I think that'd be a fine idea.' And that's how it all started was right there." The concept, according to Wetter, was to build improvements to the landing that would both serve local

Worker and housing shortages hamper Boscobel area growth

By **JOE HART**

The local worker shortage came to a head over the July 4 holiday weekend at Boscobel's Wisconsin Secure Program Facility (WSPF). The prison was so short-handed that Warden Gary Boughton had to pull a couple of shifts on the housing unit over the weekend. "We had it covered going into the weekend," he said. But last-minute sick leave left the staff stretched. Boughton took half-shifts on Saturday and Sunday to ensure that no-one patrolled the housing unit alone, he said. "All I am is another pair of eyes and ears." Across Boscobel's leading employers, similar stories reverberate. The worker shortage that is impacting the rest of the U.S. is also affecting local businesses. The coffee-klatch explanation for the so-called Great Resignation is that "no-one wants to work anymore." But among the factors impacting the local worker shortage are changes in Boscobel's population dynamics, Pethan said. The population is shrinking and the percentage of people over 65 is growing. In 2010, the city's median age was 34, and 13 percent of the population was over 65, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). By 2020, the median age had risen to 44, and 20 percent of the population was over 65. "Typically, you see a rapid decline in participation in the labor pool after 65," said Pethan. In other words, Boscobel needs to retain and recruit younger workers to solve the labor shortage. The major obstacle to doing so is a lack of housing. Brisbois said that his top concern right now is housing that's affordable on working-

HEALTHY FEELS LIKE
being silly

Small moments.
Better health.

GUNDERSEN
BOSCOBEL AREA
HOSPITAL AND CLINICS

CREEK

Continued from Page 1

settling on the bottom of the creek and filling in.”

Sinking sidewalk

It’s possible that the creek’s not rising, but the sidewalk is sinking. The section underwater was poured in 2003, according to Reynolds, and that section is considered a wetland.

“When we poured it, it was a very dry October. It is possible that the sidewalk has settled, but I do not think that is the case,” he said.

Either way, a quick fix might be to add another layer of concrete to the walkway to get it above the waterline. “I don’t know if this would be an issue for the DNR when putting in additional fill in the wetlands or not. I don’t think that it would be, but we would need the proper permits to do it.”

Citizen action

The land-use agreement between the city and the DNR expired after six months, according to Barta, but could be renewed. In the meantime, the

DNR has no plans to study or solve the flowage, preferring to partner with communities on such projects.

In the meantime, Roling is taking matters into her own hands, with the DNR’s blessing to remove downed trees and abandoned beaver dams.

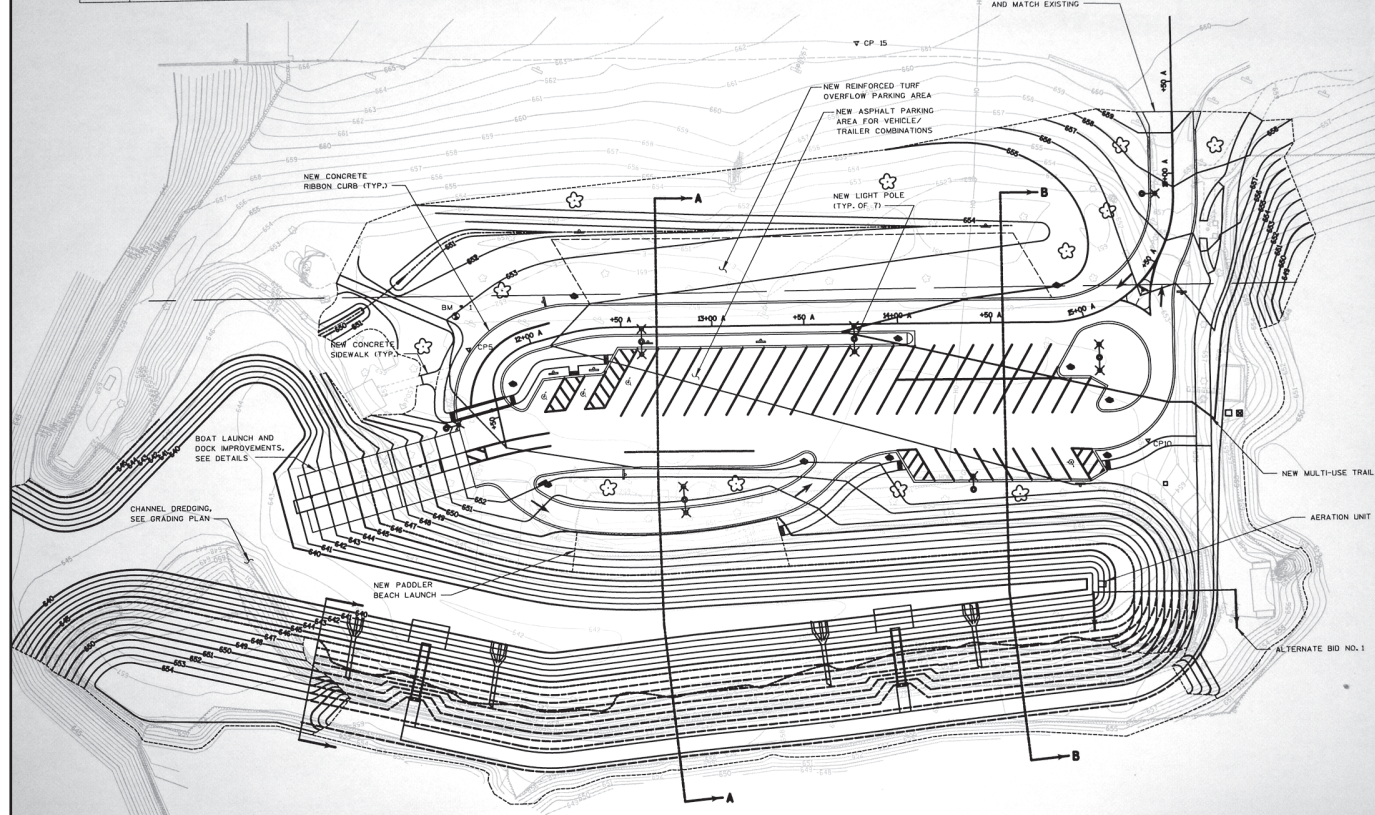
“That is going to take more planning,” Roling said. “That is going to take people willing to get dirty, people willing to work with a thought process.”

She’s tackled two dams already on her own, dislodging an inflatable kiddie pool, a volleyball, old lumber, and other trash. On September 11, she aims to corral volunteers to head deeper into the swamp to tackle more blockages there. An information meeting will take place at the Boy Scout cabin on August 22, 5 p.m.

Volunteers are encouraged to join the Facebook group Friends of Sanders Creek, which Roling created to help coordinate efforts to cleanup the creek.

CONTROL POINT TABLE			
CP #	NORTHING	EASTING	ELEVATION
5 MAG NAIL	817698.61	633924.04	652.61
10 MAG NAIL	817803.62	633170.80	652.10
15 MAG NAIL	817935.54	633398.99	661.28

SURVEY BENCHMARK TABLE			
BM NO.	DESCRIPTION	ELEV.	
BM # 1	50 PIPES IN LIGHT POLE, NE CORNER OF PARKING LOT	653.48	



Changes to the boat landing, shown in this engineering sketch, include regrading to improve access, a new dock, a separate canoe landing, and other improvements.

SHORTAGES

Continued from Page 1

class wages. “Sure, we’ve got to attract new workers, but we just don’t have the housing for them, either rental or existing houses for sale,” he said.

“Without housing, we’re not going to address the workforce shortage.”

Theresa Braudt, administrator at Gunderson Boscobel Area Hospital & Clinics echoed this impact. “I have found that it’s hard to recruit people here because housing is a barrier,” she said.

Bidding wars

Bobbi Jo Bomkamp-Drone, a real estate agent for Century 21 in Boscobel, is feeling the effects of the housing crunch firsthand. “I’ve been doing this for 22 years and I’ve never seen anything like this market,” she said.

One of her clients, approved for a loan backed by the Veterans Administration, looked for a full year before he found a home. “He just wanted a home for his family, and it took us a year of multiple offers, \$20,000 and \$30,000 over the asking price. It makes it a lot harder when you’re fighting with all these other buyers,” she said.

The last three houses Bomkamp-Drone sold were to work-at-home professionals from Milwaukee, she said. She reports that such buyers, who bring a cash offer after selling an existing home, are beating out first-time home buyers with a conventional mortgage. “They can afford to come down here and buy a house priced at \$200,000 here that would have been \$400,000 in Milwaukee. Our locals can’t afford that.”

Boscobel’s graying population compounds the problem. Nearly 60 percent of owner-occupied houses in the city are home to someone 55 years old or older, while 35 percent are occupied by someone 65 or older, according to the most recent CSA.

“It’s a huge issue. The elderly can’t find anything to downsize to,” said Lisa Wallin-Kapinus, Administrator for the Boscobel School District. She has been looking for housing for one of the school principals with no luck. “We can’t find anything—to buy or rent.” Instead, her teachers commute from

neighboring communities. One travels all the way from Oregon, Wisconsin, a one-and-a-half hour drive.

State-wide problem

The situation in Boscobel closely mirrors housing shortages across the state. A report commissioned by the Wisconsin Real Estate Association in 2019 traced the deficiency to the 2008 Great Recession. While the economy eventually regained lost ground, the housing industry did not.

The report names several factors, including tepid efforts statewide to develop and build new housing, rising construction costs, and zoning and regulations that favor larger lots and more expensive homes. Today, ironically, the worker shortage is compounding the problem.

“I’ve talked to contractors, and they can’t find people to build them because the labor market is so tight,” said Brisbois.

Overtime blues

At the WSPF, a chronic shortage of guards has led to long hours of both voluntary and involuntary overtime to cover shifts. Open shifts are allocated by seniority to volunteers, as well as staff from other nearby prisons, according to the warden. When they run out volunteers, supervisors “pre-order” staff—essentially, involuntary overtime. It’s common to end an eight-hour shift and be “ordered” to work an additional 8 hours, back-to-back.

All told, according to Boughton, that adds up to between 20 and 30 people every day working overtime for an average weekly of 1,000 hours. The current job vacancy rate at the prison is 35.2 percent, according to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

Other area employers are also struggling to fill vacancies. Town and Country Sanitation, for example, has instituted changes in garbage handling procedures, in part to increase efficiency to compensate for lack of workers, according to owner Doug Enke, who spoke recently at a City Hall forum.

Path forward

There’s no short-term fix for Boscobel’s worker and housing shortages, but there is some

hope for the near-term future.

The first of five new eight-unit apartment buildings is under construction between Highway 61 and Sanders Creek on the northwest side of Boscobel. These are multi-bedroom apartments designed for working families and will likely rent for around \$1,000 a month. The city also recently purchased 10 vacant lots in the Pine Shores housing development in the hopes of luring a developer to build single-family housing on them.

Another initiative is designed to spur workforce development. Last month, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College announced that it has received a \$2.9 million grant to help retrain workers and fill empty job positions in the area, including Boscobel. Spending will be coordinated with local manufacturing companies, and “will help businesses train more than 500 employees, hire more than 300, and promote dozens of incumbent workers over three years,” according to a press release announcing the grant.

“The key to solving this, long term, is education,” said Dennis Cooley, the Charger Leadership Director at SW Tech. “The key going forward is that we’re talking to younger people and letting them know they can find their dream job right here in southwestern Wisconsin, and they can find it right now.”

Cooley said that the grant might also help ease the housing crunch. “We’re talking about that too,” he said. “How do we build our building trades education? There’s an opportunity here, and we can create a new opportunity for entrepreneurs to step up. It’s happened before.”

You go against the grain, you’re bound to get splinters, but that’s the price of not conforming. The risk of originality is humiliation which is another way of saying failure.

~Ernest Hemingway, as quoted in A. E. Hotchner, *The Good Life According To Hemingway*, 2008

LANDING

Continued from Page 1

boating enthusiasts and boost the city’s appeal as a recreational hub.

“We’ve been working on this a long, long time,” Wetter said. “We’re moving in the right direction. I hope down the road we could get a couple more grants and make it nicer, but I think we need to continue on with it. If we’re advertising for tourism, we better have something to show them for our tourism.”

The proposal

The new boat landing would replace the current launch with one that could handle two boats instead of one. It would feature a floating dock to ease loading and unloading. Paddled boats would be shifted away from the dock to a beach-grade launch off to one side. The parking lot would be raised from its current elevation to help prevent flooding.

The entire channel, or backwater, would be re-graded to a gentle, walkable slope to replace the current steep grade, and the rocky point on the southwest entrance to the channel would be softened to allow easier access to the landing from the main river.

The original plan included two, concrete, wheelchair accessible fishing piers on the west side of the slough. Those cost \$85,000 each and have been eliminated from the plan in order to cut the budget. Instead, Reynolds said the city

could build one for less cost.

Other cost savings came from shifting work from the construction contractors to city workers. For example, tree-cutting can be handled by city crews.

Economic impact

For Wetter, the boat landing project is part of a larger vision for Boscobel to live up to its claim of being Wisconsin’s “recreation destination.” Tourism and recreation are a growing economic driver for rural areas, and proponents tout their ability to boost local businesses.

“Right now, if somebody comes from Milwaukee or Chicago with their RV and they pull into town. They say, ‘We’re here to go UTV riding and do the things that you’re advertising for. But before we go, we want to go and get set up in your RV park.’ We have to send them to Muscoda,” Wetter said. “And guess what? When they get to Muscoda, they’re not coming back to Boscobel. If this is what we’re going to advertise, then we’ve got to follow up on it and do the right thing.”

Scott Teuber, who owns Boscobel’s Wisconsin River Outings, is in a good position to judge this economic impact. Every year, his business brings about 3,000 paddle enthusiasts to Boscobel, about 2,000 of which use the boat landing.

“Three-quarters of our cus-

tomers are heading east down 61 and 18 toward Madison or Milwaukee,” he said. “Tall Tails, Kwik Trip, Casey’s, A&W, they are all getting people who stop and buy.”

User fees are another source of income from the project. Currently, fees are charged only for putting a boat in the water, and all other uses are free. In the past, those fees have totaled only a few thousand dollars a year, but with increased amenities down the road, including the potential for primitive tent camping, those fees could increase.

Next steps

Boscobel’s City Council will hold a final vote at its next meeting, August 1, 7 p.m. Residents are urged to attend. If approved, the project will commence in the fall and ideally be complete by springtime, according to Reynolds.

The Boscobel Dial
 901 Wisconsin Ave.
 Boscobel, WI 53805
 Phone (608) 375-4458
 Fax (608) 375-2369
 E-mail: dialeditor@boscobeldial.net
dialads@boscobeldial.net
 USPS 061-280

Published Every Thursday by
Morris Newspaper Corp.
 of Wisconsin

Periodicals Postage Paid at
 Boscobel, WI 53805
 Subscription Rate: \$45 per year in state;
 \$54.50 per year out of state

Moving??
 Update your address
 so you don't
 miss out!

The Boscobel Dial
 901 Wisconsin Ave., Boscobel • 608.375.4458

What happens when you
 don't advertise?

Very little.

Advertise TODAY!
The Boscobel Dial
 901 Wisconsin Ave., Boscobel • 608.375.4458

GILIGAN'S ISLAND
 THE MUSICAL

Richland Center High School Auditorium
 1996 US Hwy 14, Richland Center

July 30 at 2:00 & 7:00
July 31 at 2:00
August 5 & 6 at 7:00
August 7 at 2:00

Adults \$15 | Children \$10

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale.