

THE GAZETTE'S EDITORIAL

Welcome cooperation on Cedar Lake

Cedar Rapids Mayor Ron Corbett called it a “big step forward.” We hope he’s on the money.

The mayor was describing a cooperative agreement between the city, the Linn County Board of Supervisors and Alliant Energy to chart the future of Cedar Lake. Once a source of water for Alliant’s Sixth Street coal-burning power plant, the lake just north of downtown sits poised for a second act as a recreation destination.

The city, county and company are forming a committee to study ideas for developing the 115-acre lake and potential funding sources to pay for them.

It’s a remarkable victory

for the Friends of Cedar Lake, a band of community members led by former parks commissioner Dale Todd who have worked for more than a year to put Cedar Lake on the priority map. It wasn’t all that long ago that the government and business powers holding the lake’s fate showed little or no interest in its future development.

That’s all changed. And it’s a credit to the efforts of Friends and the vision of community leaders coming to the table.

It’s also a heartening example of cooperation between the city and Board of Supervisors. In the past, board members have complained that too

often, Cedar Rapids asks for county help after a project already has been planned and finalized. In this case, cooperation is coming at the beginning, so the county and city will each have a role shaping the project and their participation.

But as anyone who follows the ways of government knows, forming a committee does not guarantee progress. Many committee reports or recommendations end up sitting on a shelf.

And the challenges remain substantial. The mayor may be on the money, but finding the money to remake the lake will be a considerable task. In recent years, chemical contaminants have resulted

in limits on the consumption of fish from the lake.

Also, the Cedar Rapids City Council must decide whether to extend flood protection north of Quaker Oats to protect Cedar Lake from potential flooding. Protection likely holds the key to eligibility for state lake restoration dollars. But it’s not cheap.

But now, at least, there’s a commitment from community leaders to evaluate and attempt to tackle these and other issues. Cedar Lake is on the priority map. And it’s a great chance to show the positive power of cooperation.

● Comments: (319) 398-8262; editorial@thegazette.com