

# Stauber Visits Two Harbors

by Kitty Mayo

U.S. Representative Pete Stauber made a trip for a visit to Two Harbors last week, speaking to the city council there about the proposed water treatment plant renovation project.

Stauber, a Republican party member, was greeted outside the door of city hall by a group of local residents, gathered there, they said, to show dissent for Stauber's visit. One point of contention was that they claimed the city did not appropriately follow required procedures for giving notice of a public meeting in a timely manner.

The city did respond to an inquiry about this, stating that they had posted a notice for the October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting on the Council Chambers entrance, the legally required posting site. The city says a second notice, previously posted for the rescheduling of an earlier meeting with Stauber, was also put up at that same location. They say that even though they are not required, a notice of the October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting was put on the city's website under "Notices". Posting on the website calendar is not a requirement, and the meeting

was added there on the day of the meeting.

Todd Redmann, a member of the Democratic party, stated that he was on hand to document what he feels is Stauber's pattern of minimizing the public's ability to have access to him.

"Stauber does this to insulate himself against having to answer difficult questions, this is about real access to elected officials," said Redmann.

Several others, claiming both Democrat and Independent status, were on hand as a show of protest against Stauber's visit. About 15 members of the public were in attendance, and the forum was not opened to general public for questions or comments.

In the meeting Stauber thanked Mayor Chris Swanson for the invitation, and focused most of his comments on the water treatment plan project, stating, "We need the funding, we get it, that's what we are fighting for."

Going on to explain that the initial \$10 million request for federal funding for the water treatment plant renovation has already been trimmed down to \$3.5 million, Stauber said the process is

still underway with the outcome unknown at this time, with negotiations still ongoing.

In response, Swanson requested that Stauber consider pushing for more than \$3.5 million, especially given that the project was exceeding the initial estimate of \$22 million, and was bid at \$29.5 million.

Stauber responded that "my job now is to hold at \$3.5 million, that is the best we are going to be able to do."

Another topic touched on by Stauber was the problem that small municipalities face with unfunded mandates, stating, "The only option is to increase property taxes, and that's difficult to do."

Swanson brought up the issue of housing shortage, stating "That's our number one priority as a city." He mentioned that a new housing study will be completed soon, and expects the "desperate need" found in a study four years ago will only be emphasized. Stauber suggested that public-private partnerships have been successful in addressing this problem elsewhere.

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