



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

June 10, 2021

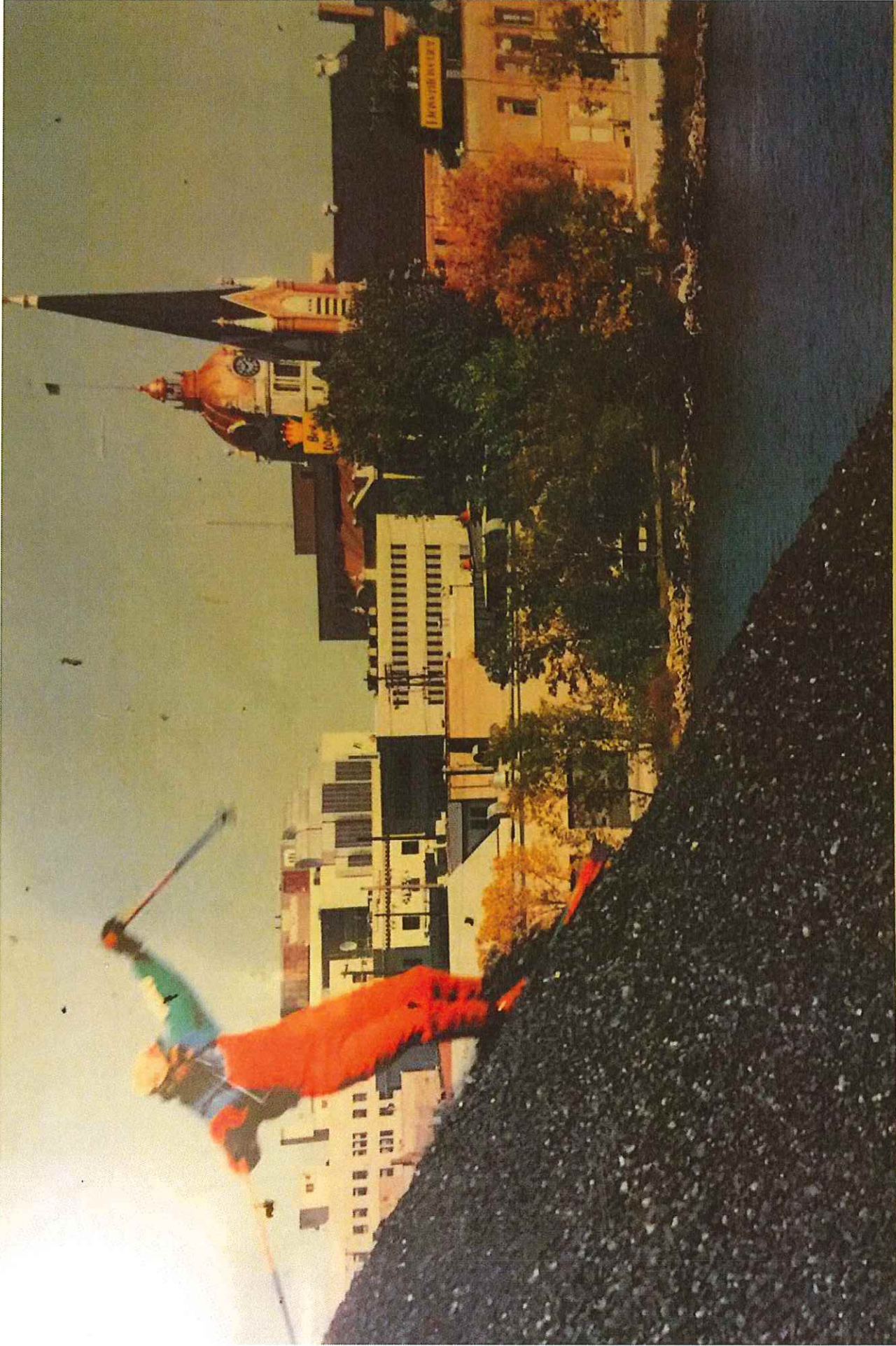
Testimony to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs on Assembly Bill 389

Chairman Swearingen and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 389 relating to the relocation of the Green Bay coal piles. I am thrilled to be here with Senator Wimberger and present this solution to a problem that has been facing Green Bay for over a hundred years.

Earlier this spring, Governor Evers indicated his support of the coal pile relocation/port expansion project in Brown County. This project will transform the economic and scenic landscape of Green Bay's downtown riverfront. By relocating a dirty, unsightly coal storage facility to a new parcel of land now available, the city will be able to redevelop this brownfield site into a \$100 million taxable property that spans over a ¼ mile of downtown riverfront. For sixty years, the city, county, elected officials, business groups and residents have tried to get this coal facility relocated out of the downtown area, and that possibility is now within reach.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of this bill I encourage you to join me in supporting this legislation



S K I G R E E N B A Y



STATE SENATOR
Eric Wimberger
DISTRICT 30

Testimony on Assembly Bill 389

Assembly Committee on State Affairs

Thursday, June 10, 2021

Chairman Swearingen and Members,

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on Assembly Bill 389, which will provide funding to move the coal piles in downtown Green Bay.

Green Bay lies on a delta formed by the Fox and East rivers. It is a back filled swamp area that was not originally a desirable land. In fact, the reason Native Americans were content with French traders setting up fur trade operations there was because it was an unused mosquito and stench filled area. As such, residential areas grew on the small hills located away from the mosquitos a short distance from what is now the downtown. The river front was slowly filled in over decades and relegated to industrial or commercial use. Rail lines bracketed both sides of the Fox River to service port shipping.

Rail still rumbles through the West Fox River side of Green Bay and services industry including the Coal Piles there. On the East side, the rail line was turned into a trial system in the 1990s and that catalyzed downtown renewal. There are no plans to eliminate the rail line on the West side, but the Coal Piles cause coal dust to blow onto the residential areas on the West and East side. The issue is so great that property values are affected. A combination of the rail lines and coal piles on the west side cause blight. Crime is high in that area as a result.

In the last few years, the Coal Pile property owners, C. Reiss Coal Company, have agreed to a property swap. WPS closed its power plant at the mouth of the Fox River and the city purchased the property. C. Reiss will move to that old WPS location and the city of Green Bay will take ownership of the current C. Reiss property on the river front. However, the old WPS power plant site does not have the requisite ship docking or rail access spur. C. Reiss will do a property swap, but it must be a one for one similarly developed property.

This legislation is to provide funding to help develop the old WPS site to standard for the property swap. The arrangement will free up valuable riverfront space near the Mason Street Bridge for modern development, and will reduce air pollution in the near downtown area. The old WPS property will need a rail spur, ship docking facilities, and drainage and fill to effect the plan. Part of the plan will be funded by selling a portion of the old WPS site to current neighbors who have already agreed to purchase it when available.

County and City leaders estimate a three phase development plan will cost approximately \$20M. Phases will include 1) rail spur connection to nearby lines, 2) fill and drainage development, and 3) docking facilities for ships requiring pilings.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our testimony this morning.

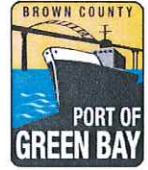
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DEAN R. HAEN
DIRECTOR

June 10, 2021

RE: Committee on State Affairs Testimony

Members of the Committee on State Affairs:

Good afternoon, my name is Dean Haen, Brown County Director of the Port & Resource Recovery Department that oversees the Port of Green Bay. Thank you for the opportunity to hear from Brown County and the Port of Green Bay in support of AB389.

In 2018, Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) decommissioned the coal-fired Pulliam Power Plant. The property sits at the mouth of the Fox River with the deepest draft, in addition to having rail connectivity and direct interstate access. Brown County has identified the WPS Pulliam Plant property for port expansion purposes in numerous studies and reports over the past 20 years. These studies and reports include various Port Strategic Plans, Property Acquisition Plans, and Port Development Plans.

For decades the City of Green Bay has sought to relocate C. Reiss Coal Company from downtown Green Bay. The City and County are aligned and in partnership to meet both of our goals and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to both relocate C. Reiss Coal Company and expand the Port of Green Bay.

In February 2021, Brown County purchased 43.89 acres of the site from WPS with the intent to upgrade site infrastructure and redevelop it for active Port operation. The project includes dock wall construction, placement of mooring bollards, construction of crane pads, dredging, resurfacing, filling an old slip, and installing a new rail spur. The Port committed \$2.2 million to acquire the site, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) allocated a \$500,000 grant to support the purchase. The development costs for the Pulliam site are estimated at \$21 million to update site infrastructure to a state-of-the-art Port facility.

The Port is committed to this project but has used all its available funding to purchase the property and will need state and federal assistance to see this once-in-a-lifetime project to completion.

While the Port of Green Bay has a successful track record of receiving grants, the project is significantly larger in scope than available local funding can provide. The relocation

would result in residential, commercial, and additional clean Port-related industrial growth in the downtown area through the redevelopment of the C. Reiss Coal Company property. The City and County are pursuing federal Marine Highway Project designation which will establish eligibility for USDOT Maritime Administration Port Infrastructure Development Program funds and other federal grant dollars. The Port will also be applying for a WI Harbor Assistance Grant and has asked Senator Baldwin for a direct appropriation of funds.

Without additional state and federal funding, the project will face significant delays, it could take many years to implement or could potentially not get implemented at all. If AB389 is passed, as written, Brown County is concerned about its ability to encumber the money by August 31, 2022.

With funding for this project, Brown County expects to use the money as a match to federal grant programs to complete the redevelopment of the Pulliam site and put it into active use within three years. In addition, the redevelopment of the site for active Port use is estimated to generate significant jobs and have an economic impact of \$87 million over five years. Cleanup and redevelopment of the 35.5-acre downtown coal piles site would increase property values for the site by more than \$145 million, and create much-needed housing, new commercial uses, and clean industrial/Port expansion.

Thank you to the Sponsors of this bill; Representative Steffen, Representative Macco, and Representative Kitchens, and Co-Sponsors; Senator Cowles and Senator Wimberger for your support of this bill.

Thank you all for your time and consideration,



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