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Flathead County
Planning and Zoning Office

Discovery Lakeside Public Marina Minor Variance Request

Date: 12/30/25
Project: Discovery Lakeside Public Marina
Owner: Flathead Lake Land Partners
Contractor: nuWest Builders
Consultant: Flathead Lakeshore Consulting LLC

Description:

The proposed public marina project is requesting one minor variance for dock length. The proposed dock extends 159 feet from the shoreline vs 100 feet allowable. The length variance is needed to provide for adequate water depth for the inner row of proposed boat slips as well as safety for the public users. The location for the marina is shallow even at full pool. And uncertainty about future fluctuating lake levels only increases the concern about water depth during the short boating season.

Applicable Lakeshore Regulation:

4.3(B)(2)(c)(2): "The maximum length for any dock shall be 100 feet."

General Criteria for variance approval:

a. Strict enforcement would result in undue hardship.

Shallow water: Limiting the dock length to 100 feet creates a water depth hardship. Due to the shallow lakebed at this location, boat slips need to be moved further out from shore than can be accommodated within the length regulations.

Public Safety: Any dock design that opens up to the lake will create a public safety hazard hardship. The dock needs to be enclosed as much as possible for safe use in all weather and wave conditions.

b. No reasonable alternatives exist.

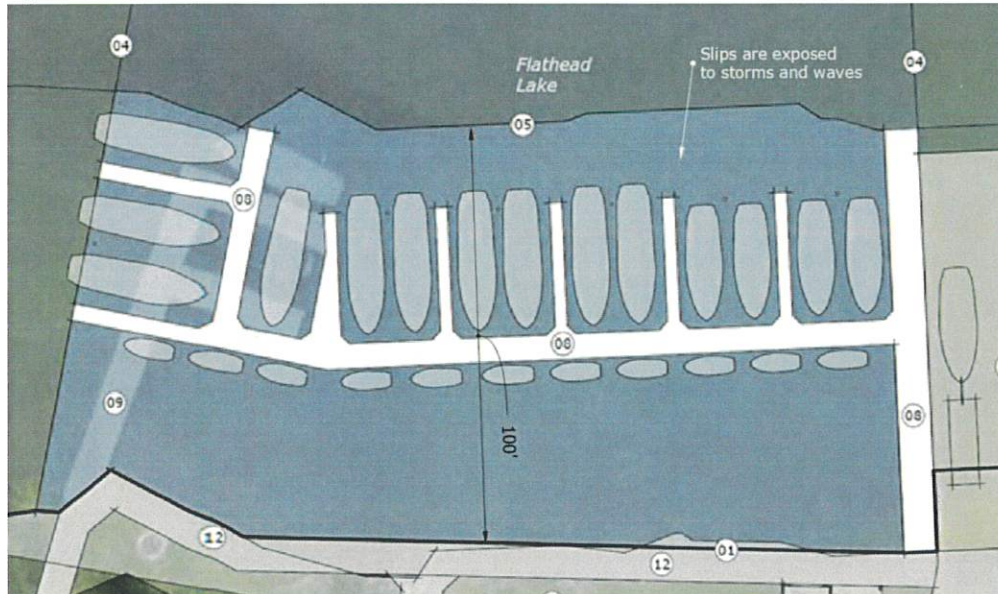
Several alternative marina designs were considered that could remain within the 100' length limit:

Option One



Option One: A public marina has already been permitted for this location, under the previous owners. However, that design is impractical. Many of the slips are too shallow for use even at full pool. The slips are also exposed to wind and waves from the main lake, which makes use of the dock impractical and unsafe.

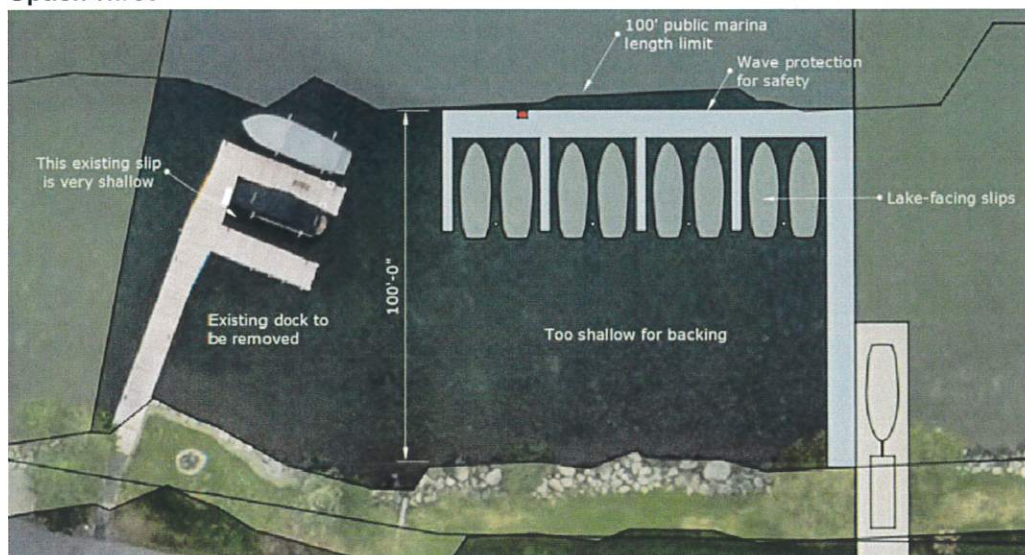
Option 2



Option Two:

Shore facing slips make the best use of a shallow lakebed by orienting the propellor/ stern drive/ outboard motor in the deepest water. However, this configuration exposes the sterns of the boats to the full wind and waves of the lake. This is not a practical or safe solution.

Option Three



Option Three: A single row of conventional lake-facing slips does not work within the 100 foot length limit due to the shallow water which makes backing and maneuvering basically impossible.

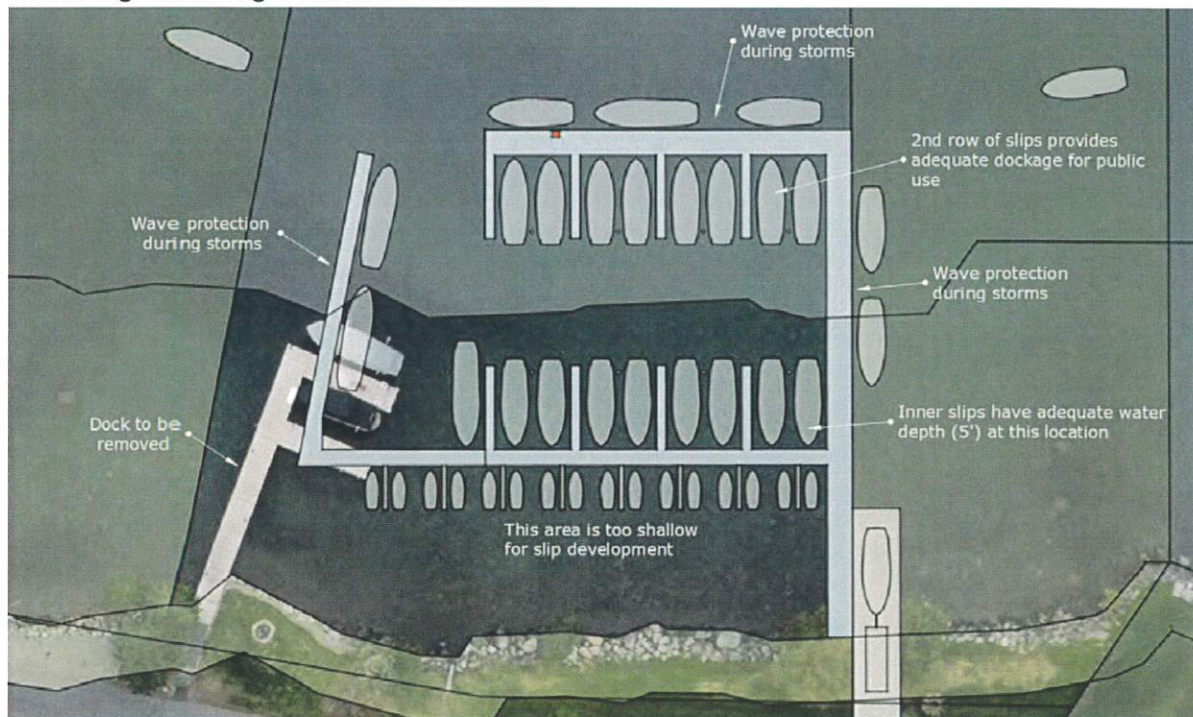
c. Granting the variance would not have an adverse impact on the lake or lakeshore

Granting the length variance would not have an adverse impact on the lake or lakeshore. The proposed marina has significantly fewer boat slips than allowed, which reduces impact.

Summary:

The only feasible dock for this location, which accommodates the shallow water depth and provides for safe docking, is the proposed design. The inner row of shore facing slips work well with the shallow water and the second outer wing with lake facing slips provides protection for a harbor area, as well as additional moorage for public boats.

Dock design with length variance as submitted



End of variance request

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