Letter: Queen City plan ignores historical weather pattern

The 20-story Queen City proposal, on the Outer Harbor, in the direct Lake Erie seiche path, makes no sense at all. From 1948 to 1955 I kept a dinghy at Sandy Banister's moorings just down the beach. Each year a seiche stacked our boats on the rocks.

Buffalo is at the downwind end of a long shallow lake. When that southwest wind blows hard enough, the lake piles our way, like a tsunami; like my grandfather sipping coffee from a saucer; I sneeze at him; Grampa has a coffee seiche.

The seiche of 1844, a terrible blast of wind, raised the water in Buffalo Harbor 22 feet. Lake steamers and canal boats littered downtown Buffalo. Fifty-three people died; there was inestimable property damage. Abraham Lincoln saw fit to build our breakwall to blunt these awesome forces.

A seaman friend of mine spent a nerve-jangling night aboard the derrick ship McCauley in Buffalo Harbor during a seiche. "We dropped 12x12 timbers between the boat and the concrete face of the dock; it got ground and shredded to pulp in a couple hours."

This fall Buffalo suffered two seiches. Lake Erie rose 12 feet. Winds blew 70 mph. Waves did $10 million to $15 million in damage to the breakwall and drove across Fuhrmann Boulevard, Gallagher Beach, the Queen City site, and Times Beach. Insurance is settling the cost of a barge grinding against the small boat harbor wall.

The Outer Harbor is a barrier island exposed to devastating natural forces. In decent weather, this barrier island is an idyllic place, perfection for the state park proposed by the Partnership for the Public Good. It is deadly, uninhabitable when the weather turns.

If this rude intrusion into what should be a state park is destroyed by a seiche, will we be expected to rebuild it?

Larry Beahan

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