

# City to make improvements on dam near country club

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CHEBOYGAN — Crews from the City of Cheboygan will make improvements to a dam near the Cheboygan Golf and Country Club, addressing concerns the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy has with the structure.



**Sabolsky**

This levee, or dam, is within the city limits and is a part of the Little Black River Watershed.

The structure is one of several that need attention from the city in order to improve the condition of the entire watershed.

“There was some erosion that exposed some rock and erosion prevention fabric. The city needs to replace some stone and top soil to fix the issue,” said Cheboygan City Manager Dan Sabolsky. “We are hoping to get to it as soon as the ground in that area is dry.”

This dam, as well as several others throughout the watershed, have been an area of concern for many years. The entire watershed covers around 17,130 acres — about 26.8 miles — in both Inverness and Beaugrand townships, as well as in the city.

For many years, it has been believed the city is responsible for the entire watershed’s maintenance and upkeep. However, after reviewing documentation recently, it was found the city is no longer entirely responsible for it.

In 1960, when many of the documents and agreements were first drafted for the flood control devices in the watershed, the city was responsible for the work, for a period of 50 years. It is now 62 years later.

“We did do our research, we did find out that — and this is great news for us — we are not responsible for the dams out in the townships,” said Sabolsky. “We were responsible for 50 years, when they were all put in about 1960. So, about 2010, we were relieved of that responsibility, but we did not know that.”

There had been some improvements made to the watershed and its

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Part of the large earthen dam in the area of the Cheboygan Golf Course has eroded away, revealing a culvert, which is also in need of repair as a part of the Little Black River Watershed. PROVIDED PHOTO BY RON WILLIAMS

## Dam

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flood control devices in the 1980s. The agreement with these improvements was the city was only responsible for them for around 15 years.

“So, as far as everything we can see, unless something else pops up, is that we’re not financially responsible,” said Sabolsky.

Sabolsky said the city’s research paid off and now there will be a letter going out from Cheboygan City Mayor Les Tebo to the county, the county drainage commissioner, Inverness and Beaugrand townships, and the local soil and water district. Sabolsky also planned on talking to representatives from each of the entities, in hopes of creating a partnership to address the issues with the watershed.

City officials plan to work with other local entities to find funding sources and other resources to perform the maintenance on the structures, due to all the vested interest for everyone. The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council may also become involved, with the amount of wetlands throughout the watershed.

“We have enough wetlands down at the mouth of the river, as it goes into the lake, that there may be ways we can get rid of some of those dams and actually create better habitat, better fish spawning areas and things like that,” said Sabolsky. “We have some great people who want to partner and I think once we get the ball rolling, I think other people will come to the ta-

ble.”

With it no longer being solely the city’s responsibility, there is sort of a gray area as to who is responsible for the work.

“We will be happy to work with all of them to find an acceptable solution, which I think would probably be a drainage district to handle that,” said Sabolsky. “We need to work as a community and ignore the political jurisdiction boundaries. We all need to get involved.”

If a drainage district were to be established, a special assessment could be levied on taxpayers to help raise funds to address the issues and perform routine maintenance throughout the watershed.

Officials said if one of the structures throughout the watershed were to break, there could be serious consequences for the areas downstream, with the potential of everything being under more than a foot of water.

“So, we definitely have to be involved,” said Sabolsky.

Sabolsky said although the city is not responsible for all of the structures, the one dam on the property of the golf and country club has an area where it is severely eroded and needs some work.

Crews from the city will go out and put some gravel in the dam to fix the erosion issues. That way, city officials know the dam is in good standing and will get it off the list with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy.

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