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Is Packers' Ted Thompson more willing to give it a try?

SPORTS, B1

The Sheboygan Press



www.sheboyganpress.com

Tuesday, March 27, 2012

A GANNETT COMPANY

City panel backs more money for dredging

By Bob Petrie

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The City of Sheboygan would contribute \$250,000 toward the cost of dredging tainted sediment from the Sheboygan River inner harbor under a plan endorsed by the Common Council's Finance Committee Monday night.

The money, if approved by the Common Council next week, would be added to \$250,000 already approved by Sheboygan County, for a total match of \$500,000 needed to secure a \$1.5 million grant from the state Department of Transportation Harbor Assistance Program, which will help pay for the harbor

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dredging, from Eighth Street east to the harbor.

It will also allow the 170,000 cubic yards of sediment to be trucked to a licensed landfill either in Whitelaw or Hilbert, instead of the now-scrapped idea to build a landfill at Sheboygan County Memorial Airport, which was opposed by surrounding residents and voted down by the Town of Sheboygan Falls Town Board.

The Environmental Protection Agency will choose the landfill where the sediment will be taken.

"This is the cleanest way to do it," said Sheboygan City Administrator James Amodeo. "It takes all of the uncertainty out of it. It puts (the sediment) into a landfill that they have to monitor and measure it, based on the fees they charge to put it there. So the city's in the best place it could be and so is the county."

The City of Sheboygan had appropriated \$100,000 in this year's budget for the match, but when the landfill was switched, the city needed to kick in an additional \$150,000 for its \$250,000 share, which is what the Finance Committee endorsed Monday night.

The money will come from the city's undesignated reserve fund, which Amodeo said has about \$5.6 million in it.

Ald. Don Hammond, com-

mittee chairman, said the city's match would go a long way to get the harbor dredged.

"If we say no, this would be a ... project that doesn't happen, and that would be a shame," Hammond said.

Chad Pelishek, the city's economic development manager, said the \$250,000 the city is contributing to the project is relatively low, compared to the more than \$10 million it will cost to dredge the river from Eighth Street to the harbor. The EPA will cover most of the dredging cost.

"This is kind of a once-in-a-lifetime chance and we could never afford to dredge the harbor on our own," Pelishek said.

The harbor will be dredged to a depth of 14 to 16 feet, which will be deep enough to handle most boats, Pelishek said. Upriver from Eighth Street, the EPA will be dredging to a similar depth. Right now, Pelishek said, the harbor area is as shallow as 3 feet in some areas near South Pier District and needs to be dredged.

"The EPA dredging the portion upstream of the Eighth Street Bridge is great, but if you can't get to it, what good is it?" Pelishek said.

The DOT grant won't be available until about mid-May, but Aaron Brault, the county's planning director, said the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has agreed to front the money to get the project

going until the DOT grant is approved. Work has to be done by the end of September.

"The DNR is basically for a lack of a better term is giving us a bridge loan, because they feel confident we'll be successful in getting our grant through the DOT," Brault said.

Local, state and federal officials had to scurry to find a new site for the harbor sediment after the county's efforts to get a use permit for the airport site was denied by the Town of Sheboygan Falls Board. Town residents feared the pollutants contained in the sediment, if placed at the airport, might leach into the groundwater and pollute nearby wells, despite assurances from the DNR, EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that the sediment was safe.

Dredging the inner harbor east of the Eighth Street Bridge by the Corps of Engineers is one of the last steps in a process of cleaning up the Sheboygan River from Lake Michigan to Sheboygan Falls, which was declared an EPA Superfund site in 1986. More heavily polluted sediment will be removed this year from the river between the Eighth Street Bridge and the 14th Street Bridge.

When all the work is done, the river will be removed from the EPA's list of the most polluted areas in the Great Lakes region.

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