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# City looks at watershed solutions

## Tip of the Mitt council, Cheboygan plan educational workshop for Little Black River area leaders, residents

**Kortny Hahn**

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CHEBOYGAN — The City of Cheboygan has been discussing different avenues to fix some issues with the Little Black River Watershed, which is believed to be the sole responsibility of the city to maintain.

Cheboygan City Manager Dan Sabolsky and Cheboygan City Mayor Pro Tem



**Sabolsky**

Brett Mallory met with Cheboygan County officials, as well as the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council regarding what is happening with the watershed.

It is Sabolsky's belief the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council is going to work with the City of Cheboygan

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The Little Black River Watershed, including this portion near the Cheboygan Golf and Country Club, needs a significant amount of work done to it, to help the water flow properly through the area. There are many concerns about failing dams and clogged drains.

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CHEBOYGAN DAILY TRIBUNE

# Watershed

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to put together an educational workshop for government leaders and people who live throughout the area covered by the Little Black River Watershed.

"To bring them together and kind of say 'OK, here is what a drainage district can do for you, here's how it will be structured,'" said Sabolsky.

The Little Black River Watershed — and also the Cheboygan Dam — provides the City of Cheboygan its flood protection during fall rains and spring snow melt that is trying to flow to Lake Huron. The entire watershed project covers a total of 17,130 acres — around 26.8 miles — in parts of Inverness and Beaugrand townships and the City of Cheboygan.

Back in 1960, an agreement had been reached with the city and the federal government for the maintenance of the dams, culverts and levees within the watershed, through the city's department of public works.

Since the agreement was put into place several decades ago, there have been no fees collected to help maintain the infrastructure, some of which is located outside of the city limits. The city's department of public work also does not have much of the proper equipment needed to perform the maintenance, such as vehicles that can go across the terrain.

Some of the infrastructure, such as the dams, were only built to last around 40 years, but have been in place for at least 20 more years than intended. The drains in the watershed have also been observed to be clogged with trees and other debris.

There have been several entities who are working to find the financing needed to improve several of the dams and the entire watershed. However, there is not an assessment district set up because there has never been any type of payment for flood control in the county.

The city officials have also been working with Leroy Ormsbee of the soil and water conservation district in the city. The conservation district is willing to help the city by putting some funding behind the partnership to correct some of the issues in the watershed, Sabolsky said.

Ormsbee presented Sabolsky with a number of documents during their meetings.

"A lot of those documents dispelled some of the thoughts out there that we were solely responsible for everything, whether in the city in that drainage area, or even out in the county," said Sabolsky. "So, some of the things we're responsible for was for 50 years. A lot of those things were put in in 1960."

Sabolsky said there was another document he had seen which stated the city was only responsible for some of the structures for around 15 years.

The City of Cheboygan also has an arrangement with the Cheboygan Golf and Country Club to put some stone and soil at the levee on the south side of the property owned by the golf course, as well as reseed it, to grow some grass. This will help to filter the storm-water running into the watershed.

After this work is done, and with the potential drainage district being formed around the Little Black River Watershed, Sabolsky said he thinks it will solve a lot of the issues at hand. Once the educational workshop has been scheduled, Sabolsky will bring the information back before the council, so members of the board can attend if they wish.