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Shoreline, road future at issue

City of Marquette considers options for Lakeshore Boulevard

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 KYLE WHITNEY - Journal Staff Writer , The Mining Journal

MARQUETTE - A shoreline restoration and road relocation project being considered by the city of Marquette could cost more than \$12 million.

"I don't believe we're standing in front of you and saying that you ultimately have to pick one of the more intensive options," Dennis Stachewicz, Marquette's director of planning and community development, told a group of about three dozen people Wednesday during a community forum on the topic. "I think this is intended to start a community conversation."

At the forum, city staff and representatives from the Superior Watershed Partnership offered a handful of options for a project along Lakeshore Boulevard between Hawley and Wright streets.

Article Photos



A half-mile stretch of rock rip-rap along Lakeshore Boule...

Each plan calls for the realignment of Lakeshore Boulevard, roughly 300 feet to the west, as well as armoring the shoreline and creation of public space.

Cost estimates - which were conservative and included contingencies of 40 percent - ranged from \$5.4 million to \$12.2 million.

"I think the do-nothing option should always be in place. We consider that the base option," said Dan Veriotti, a coastal engineer with Baird Engineering, which created the designs.

Fact Box

For more info:

- Shoreline plans can be found online at mqctcy.org/lakeshore.html.
- Comments can be submitted via email at dstachewicz@mqctcy.org.

Currently, a wall of rock rip-rap protects the half-mile stretch of shoreline and Veriotti said the age of the structure - it has been around in some form since at least the 1950s - is beginning to cause problems, including water overtopping the rocks.

"It's been in place for a long time. It's approaching the end of ... its useful life," he said. "At some point, you've got to think long term about planning. Either replace it, take it out, do something about it."

The road relocation is included in the city's master plan and Stachewicz said this round of planning discussions has been spurred by the receipt of a pair of coastal zone management grants from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Those grants funded public meetings and the conceptual designs presented Wednesday.

The second grant-funded phase will involve the development of a final engineering plan, based on the decided-upon design.

Another option called for the simple removal of the current rip-rap - that option would cost about \$1.8 million - but Stachewicz said the unprotected shoreline will be eroded by about 18 inches per year. The shoreline is located adjacent to the city-owned former Cliffs Dow site, which has been leaching small amounts of pollutants toward the lake, and Stachewicz said erosion could lead to further issues.

A portion of the funding for a construction project could come from grant sources, according to Stachewicz and SWP Executive Director Carl Lindquist, though the city would still likely be responsible for matching funds.

The planning process is important, Stachewicz said, as it gives the city a shovel-ready project. If grant funding becomes available down the road, the city will be prepared to submit an application.

Veriotti said some suggested features, including emergent breakwaters and a series of lengthy groins - rigid outcroppings that extend from the shore and interrupt the flow of water and sediment - may face permitting difficulty. An option that includes a restoration of much of the current revetment, as well as the creation of a number of smaller beach areas, would be the most likely to be permitted, he said. That option was estimated to cost \$9.8 million.

City resident Don Potvin told officials he didn't understand why the city should consider relocating the road at all.

"I just see no reason to go into the Dow property and build that," he said. "I would rather you get busy and clean up the Dow property than to spend money - found money or our money - to do this. Long range, that's something that must be done."

The city and the SWP will continue gathering public input on the design options before commissioning a final engineering plan for the site.

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