

A VIEW FROM CITY HALL

Lakefront Water Safety Task Force

In August of 2016, the City of Sheboygan Board of Marina, Parks and Forestry established the Lakefront Water Safety Task Group. This task group was formed after five individuals were washed off of South Pier by wave action in two separate incidents on the same day. That day two individuals were lost and three were saved by the U.S. Coast Guard. The mission of the group was to review the report of a similar committee that was completed in March 2009, study the water rescue events that have occurred since the recommendations of the last report were implemented, and investigate new and additional safety measures for both the North and South swimming beaches and pedestrian access of the North and South piers on the Sheboygan lakefront and river. They were further charged to formulate a report with both short and long term recommendations that would reduce the potential for water-related loss of lives and the near drowning of our residents and visitors.

The task group membership included Chair of Public Works Committee, Chair of Board of Marina, Parks and Forestry, Superintendent of Parks and Forestry, Sheboygan Fire Department, Sheboygan Police Department, US Coast Guard, Emergency Management Director of Sheboygan County Sheriff's Department, Sheboygan City Attorney, Director of Planning and Development, Community Recreation Department, Army Corp of Engineers, Harbor Center Marina Manager, Sailing Education Association of Sheboygan, two citizen members and one alderperson.

The task group recommendations included creating three videos on water safety to be used by hotels, schools and other venues. The task group has already spoken to the hotels in the area and they are willing to show the videos on their information channel for visitors. The task group has placed a RIP current ad in the 2017 Sheboygan County Visitors guide and the Recreation Department will continue to place these ads in their quarterly mailings.

They also recommended continuing to use the message sign in Deland Park to provide RIP current warnings. The Army Corp of Engineers had designed new warning signage that they suggested Sheboygan install on the piers. The task group reviewed the signage and it is now installed at the beginning of the piers. This sign also includes additional RIP current warning signs along the lakefront. The ladders on the piers will be painted a bright color for better visibility from the water.

The City will also use its social media platforms; Nixle, Facebook, Nextdoor, city website, and Twitter to notify the public of lakefront warnings and pier closings to reach more people. A banner was placed on the home page of the City of Sheboygan website for people to check if there are any warnings issued from NOAA about RIP currents, structural RIP currents, gale warnings, or small craft advisories.

Emergency 911 dispatch personnel expressed concern about the number of people using cell phones to call 911 and the inability of the caller to tell dispatch where they are. This causes precious time to be lost while the emergency personnel and dispatch try to locate where the incident is occurring. The emergency personnel along with dispatch created a map that would help dispatch resources to where an incident is occurring. This map identifies areas with a 911 Emergency numbering system that will be

displayed by either a physical sign or stenciled numbers which dispatch will be able to ask the caller for the number on a sign or the stenciled number on the jetty.

The recommendations also call for the installation of additional life rings and a system to monitor existing life rings. A procedure was established to close piers when dangerous conditions are present. Swinging entrance warnings will be installed at each pier that will have a sign on it that reads "Warning Dangerous Conditions".

I extend my thanks to the Task Group members for the fine report and their willingness to continue to meet to quarterly to oversee water safety on our lakefront. A copy of the full report is available by following this link, bit.ly/2pCcYsH