



DRONE PHOTO COURTESY OF SKY TECH

The poor condition of the Lakeshore Road seawall is obvious to those who walk along the 3 1/2 miles of county-run shoreline.

# Seawall fix creeping forward

By Melissa Walsh  
Staff Writer

**GROSSE POINTE SHORES AND FARMS** — Rising water in Lake St. Clair may mean better fishing, but it also brings shoreline deterioration — an infrastructure issue for which Wayne County has

been seeking federal assistance several years. “We’re waiting for what the cost will be then the hunt for the money,” Wayne County Commissioner Tim Killeen told the Grosse Pointe News. The poor condition of the Lakeshore Road sea-

wall is obvious to those who walk along the 3 1/2 miles of county-run shoreline. The damage sustained from Lake St. Clair has resulted in disintegrated and fallen concrete panels with exposed rebar posts planted eight decades ago. “(The seawall) was

installed a long time ago and it is ready for some serious maintenance and repair, if not replacement,” Grosse Pointe Shores Department of Public Works Director Brett Smith said. “It’s getting to a point where it’s See SEAWALL, page 3A

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causing damage to our infrastructure, specifically a sewer we have running parallel with the seawall on Lakeshore.”

Smith said early spring his sprinkler technicians heard a gushing sound from a manhole cover while working near the sewer line between Lakeshore and its seawall in the south end of the Shores, which “sounded like a waterfall.”

Technicians investigated, uncovering an estimated flow of 80 gallons per minute during dry weather, according to a report delivered by City Engineer Jesse VanDerCreek to city council during its June 19 meeting.

“The seawall is disintegrating and the lake is literally behind the seawall,” said Smith, who pointed to a sinkhole where DPW installed 30 yards of crushed concrete earlier this month. “And we could probably install another 30 yards in that hole.”

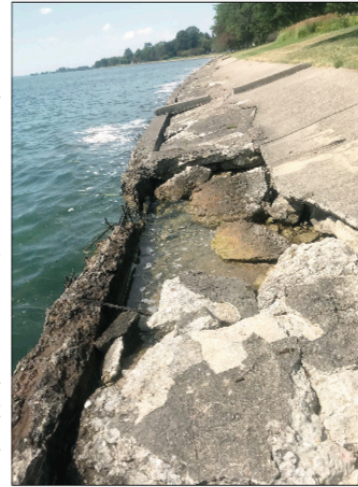
Added Smith, “The land erosion is terrible. We have one spot that the erosion is up to a flower bed. The flower bed is going to start getting washed away.”

Maintenance of the Lakeshore seawall, extending from the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in the Shores to The War Memorial in the Farms, falls under the jurisdiction of Wayne County. However, fixing hazards, such as sinkholes, emerging from erosion due to the seawall’s deterioration, has fallen on Shores and Farms personnel.

“Wayne County hasn’t reimbursed us for any repairs and we haven’t really sought reimbursement yet,” Smith said. “When we have some extra material, we’re just filling holes. What we’re doing is not a fix to the problem. We’re just trying to lessen the amount of hazards that are out there.”

Smith said he submitted several service requests to Wayne County with no results.

In March, Shores City Manager Mark



PHOTOS BY MELISSA WALSH

Areas of exposed rebar appear where chunks of concrete panel have fallen from the Lakeshore seawall.

Wollenweber and Farms City Manager Shane Reeside applied for a 2018 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Great Lakes Habitat Restoration grant for federal financial and technical assistance in restoring areas of the seawall, but were denied Friday, July 13.

The application process included a preliminary study conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Of the nine projects submitted for the grant, two were selected — Lake Erie Metro Park in Wayne County and Brandenburg Park in Chesterfield Township.

“We’ll continue to work with the Army Corps of Engineers to get grant money next year,” said Wollenweber.

“They built that road and expanded it in the ’30s and ’40s. And to do so they had to put the seawall in. It’s clearly a Wayne County thing,” Wollenweber said, explaining former U.S. Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick requested funding for the Lakeshore seawall restoration several times.

“She would make some effort to put some earmark in for it,” he said.

“We never got it. So they never fixed it.”

In 2011, a ban was placed on congressional earmarks for local initiatives.

“We’ve been contacting the county for some time regarding the deterioration of the seawall along Lakeshore Road,” Reeside said. “With higher water the wall has really taken a beating. And the embankment is being undermined.”

Reeside explained the stressed shoreline resulting from the combination of rising water and offshore storms requires a short-term approach to secure the area and make it safe and a long-term solution, which is dependent on a strategy driven



Signage along Lakeshore alerts visitors of shoreline hazards.

by Wayne County.

“It certainly will require an engineering solution,” Reeside said.

Early May, Reeside and Wollenweber jointly drafted a letter to Killeen requesting short-term assistance and a long-term plan.

Killeen responded by inviting Reeside and Wollenweber to meet with Deputy Director of Wayne County Public Services Lawrence Young and Andrew Kandrevas from the Office of the Wayne County Executive, who promised to evaluate the condition of the seawall for a long-term fix.

“We basically asked them to provide a game plan and accelerate maintenance at this point,” said Reeside. “And Mr. Killeen has been helpful with putting us in contact with the right resources in Wayne County.”

Reeside said U.S. Rep. Brenda Lawrence and Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters also have expressed initiative in finding a solution for restoring the seawall.

In the meantime, the city managers hoped for approval of their request for a NOAA grant.

“From what we heard (the request) was considered a viable project,” Reeside said.

The Farms and Shores

is determining the cost of the seawall restoration, possibly \$20 million to \$30 million.

Congressional interest in the problem “opened up the door to the Army Corps of Engineers,” Killeen said.

“So I wouldn’t call it in limbo, but it’s in the bureaucracy,” he added.

Killeen promised to keep the county involved while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues its assessment.

“It’s lurching forward, but it has to get done,” he said. “And this is as close as we’ve been. We’re talking to the right people.”

However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a federal entity, “and they’re busy,” he said.

“At least it’s creeping forward,” said Killeen.

# County commits to fixing seawall

Grosse Pointe News, Sept. 13, 2018, 1A

By Melissa Walsh  
Staff Writer

**GROSSE POINTE SHORES AND FARMS** — Deterioration along the more than three miles of Lakeshore seawall progresses as the fall season brings heavy winds and rough water.

As Wayne County — the entity that owns the county road and its seawall — seeks

federal financial assistance for long-term resolution to the pressing infrastructure issue, its director, Beverly Watts, has vowed a commitment to short-term repairs.

Until this fall, emergency maintenance of the Lakeshore seawall, extending from the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in

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the Shores to The War Memorial in the Farms, has been managed by Shores and Farms personnel, including filling sinkhole hazards with crushed concrete and repairing damaged sewer infrastructure.

Watts and members of her staff met Tuesday, Aug. 21, with Farms Mayor Louis Theros, Farms City Manager Shane Reeside, Shores City Manager Mark Wollenweber, Shores Councilman Robert Barrette Jr. and Shores Public Works Director Brett Smith regarding the deteriorating condition of the seawall.

“The meeting was productive,” said Reeside. “The county has conducted an on-site review of the seawall and identified areas where there are significant voids along the embankment. Their intent is to fill the major voids with crushed concrete and cap with a new concrete surface. This is a short-term solution to help fortify the existing seawall and



PHOTO BY MELISSAWALSH

**Grosse Pointe Shores DPW installed 30 yards of crushed concrete in this sinkhole near the Lakeshore seawall.**

improve public safety, and their goal is to complete these repairs this fall.

“As a long-term solution,” Reeside added, “the county is obtaining

cost estimates for a new seawall. This is being done while we continue to explore opportunities for federal funding.”

A representative from Wayne County

Department of Public Services confirmed Reeside’s statement Sept. 11, telling Grosse Pointe News they are “working alongside the Grosse Pointe DPW team to formalize a solution for the deteriorating seawall at Lakeshore Drive. Our internal staff will be doing an on-site visit to inspect and assess issues. Short-term repairs are slated for the end of September and Wayne County and the Pointes will continue to strategize for funds for a long-term solution.”

Council meeting Aug. 21, Wollenweber said estimated cost for repairing the seawall is close to \$3 million. Wayne County DPS leadership and personnel will meet monthly with counterparts in the

Shores and Farms to monitor progress, he added.

“I think there’s a real commitment by (Wayne County) in the short term and the long term,” Wollenweber said.







# Officials urge, 'Build the seawall'

By Melissa Walsh  
Staff Writer

**GROSSE POINTE SHORES** — "Let's get the damn seawall built," said Wayne County Commissioner Tim Killeen during the Shores city council meeting Tuesday, Feb. 19.

Attending the meeting on another topic, Killeen paused to address the state of the Lakeshore seawall.

Later during the meeting, council put on the floor a formal resolution requesting Wayne County take immediate action to mitigate dangerous conditions along the Lakeshore Road shoreline due to the deteriorating seawall.

Shores and Farms officials cite the maintenance of the county road and the seawall along it as the responsibility of Wayne County road and public works administrators.

The resolution and Killeen's remarks followed a high-profile meeting on the topic Friday, Feb. 8, when municipal, county, state and federal officials and representatives met to discuss short-term fixes and long-term solutions for shoreline sinkholes and seawall breaches along the 3 1/2-mile stretch of Lakeshore from the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club to Warner Road.

"We've got all the people in the room finally to get to work on this," Killeen said of the Feb. 8 meeting. "So this is going to be the best shot we're going to have at this in probably 30 years to actually do something."

In 1974, 45 years ago, high lake levels damaged the seawall, prompting a \$250,000 construction project by the Wayne County

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Road Commission that spring. A news brief in the May 2, 1974, edition of the Grosse Pointe News reported Shores trustees communicated to the county concerns about a newly installed downward concrete slope. They warned that bikers and pedestrians could slip on accumulated "slime and moss from the lake culture" on the concrete and fall into the lake.

On Aug. 16, 1974, the Grosse Pointe News reported Farms officials issued the same complaint, calling for concrete bumper strips to be placed along the sloped concrete.

Today, Shores and Farms officials again are urging the county to respond to outstanding complaints against the county about seawall maintenance, citing exposed rebar, falling concrete and breaches of lake water infiltration and land erosion, and demanding emergency mitigation.

Killeen said, short term, "The seawall's been like our roads are. We keep patching them, but you keep falling slowly further behind."

"Patching" work has been filling crushed concrete into sinkholes in the area between the seawall and Lakeshore Road.

Another meeting between city and county officials has not been scheduled yet, Killeen told the Grosse Pointe News on Tuesday.

"It's not going to be too far down the road," he said, and will focus on improving communication and response for urgent, short-term fixes.

A long-term solution, Killeen added, will

require analysis by county public services and legal personnel. In addition, he said, U.S. Senate and House representatives will seek federal grants and loan options.

"Identifying funding sources. This is where we're at," Killeen said.

During the city council meeting, Shores Mayor Ted Kedzierski addressed the urgency of fixing the lake water-infiltration breaches in the seawall.

"It's going to undermine Lakeshore (Road) and there's going to be a casualty," he said.

"From my vantage point as the county commissioner, that's my road out there," Killeen said. "I don't want a chunk of my road washing into Lake St. Clair."

From a reliability and risk-management perspective, he added, "It's gotta get done."

"And that's the purpose of the resolution," Kedzierski said. "We don't want to be held responsible. It could be viewed that we have concurrent jurisdiction here and that we could be somehow at fault."

"I think that's been one of the problems here," Killeen said. "Whose responsibility is it? I think there's a case to be made here that it's the property owners along Lakeshore."

"Who owns the property between the road and the lake?" he added.

"It's complicated by the French deeds that are supposedly outstanding," said Kedzierski.

According to the April 1929 edition of the Grosse Pointe Civic News, in 1925, Wayne County officials began talks with the Shores and Farms about widening the 18-foot-wide Lakeshore Road to a

120-foot-wide right-of-way to mitigate traffic bottlenecks. A 1926 resolution of the Wayne-Macomb Super-highway Commission supported the widening of Jefferson Avenue and Lakeshore Road, calling for a 120-foot right-of-way from Detroit to New Baltimore "to solve present congestion and to take care of future public demand."

In the Shores and Farms, there was "much disagreement among property owners," the publication reported, as lakefront property owners were required to dedicate a portion of land to the Wayne County Road Commission for the roadway and seawall construction.

In July 1929, the publication reported, work was underway for the construction of an 8,000-foot seawall along Lakeshore at a distance

of 80 to 100 feet from the shoreline between Vernier and Weir Lane, which was just east of Provençal Road. More than 160,000 cubic yards of land would be dredged from the lake for fill.

Michigan's McNitt Act of 1932 removed local jurisdiction of main public roads, turning them over to county authority and providing property tax relief in response to the Depression. In 1951, the McNitt Act was incorporated into Public Act 51, which governed the distribution of state revenue for county roads and set up the Michigan Transportation Fund to collect and disburse revenue to maintain them.

Whether the Shores, Farms and Wayne County will share the cost for a new seawall is unknown. If they do, Act 51 would set the criteria for costs shared between the governmental enti-

ties.

"Build the wall!" Councilman Bruce Bisballe said in jest.

Prior to the vote on the resolution, Kedzierski said, "It's reaching a point that not only is it dangerous, the road could collapse. ... I'm concerned about our liability. I don't want to be named as a defendant. We have to force Wayne County's hand."

Killeen said he was "delighted" about the resolution as a way "to get everybody's attention."