

Council views rehab plan for Lake Helen

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 29 June 2012 14:22 -



Public will get chance to give feedback on proposed changes

A soccer field, additional tennis courts and a community center could be added to an area that was once part of Lake Helen.

At their June 19 meeting, Gothenburg City Council members got a peek at a proposed site plan for the restoration of the lake prepared by Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers.

Engineer Travis Mason said making the lake smaller by filling in the shallower lobe of the lake north of the footbridge is necessary to get rid of the phosphorus problem.

The change will reduce the lake by about 25%, Mason said.

High nutrients, especially phosphorous, are responsible for toxic algae blooms that kill fish and can be deadly to dogs and other animals that drink it.

Paul Brakhage, a LakeTech, Inc. consultant hired by the council, and city officials will meet with funding source representatives of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, natural resources districts and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. The public will get a chance to offer feedback at a later date.

Brakhage and the council discussed some of the ideas presented in the proposal at a meeting earlier this month.

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Mason said he hopes a footbridge connecting the bigger and smaller lobes of the lake can remain.

A fishing dock is included in the plan, as well as three jetties to help reduce erosion from waves and provide anchor points for cables that are expected to hamper waterfowl landing patterns.

Geese feces contribute to the toxic water problem. Their waste also creates messes on the walking trail around the lake. Tall grass, planted next to the sidewalk, is hoped to keep geese away from the walking trail and grassy areas.

“Geese like big clear areas,” the engineer said.

Another road into the lake area, from Lake Avenue, has also been included and additional parking and walking trail.

In addition, the plan incorporates a special screen to filtrate rough fish eggs from the Nebraska Public Power District canal. Water from the canal and ground keep the lake full.

City services director Shane Gruber said the lake would look a lot like Cottonmill Park in Kearney when restored and have good water clarity.

Bruce Clymer, city administrator, said he suggested the community center since the Lafayette Park pavilion, which many people use for large gatherings, is not winterized and is old.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636