

Toledo City Council wants Lake Erie declared impaired

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Algae in front of the new ProMedica Headquarters in downtown Toledo, Wednesday, September 20.

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Toledo City Council Tuesday approved a resolution urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to designate the western basin of Lake Erie impaired — a move already made by other officials including the Lucas County Commissioners and Toledo Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson.

Council voted 11-1 in favor of the resolution.

Councilman Tom Waniewski cast the lone no vote.

"I don't think Lake Erie is impaired," Mr. Waniewski said. "It is a big body of water and the wind blows algae into the western basin. Lake Erie is bruised but not impaired and this will make for a big punch in the nose... There is no question harmful algae is in the lake."

Councilman Peter Ujvagi, who sponsored the council resolution, said it is critical that government addresses the excessive algae problem in the lake.

The condition of the lake has a "critical impact on our future," he said.

An "impaired" designation would give the EPA the power to identify nonpoint sources of pollution in all the watersheds that drain into the lake.

Lake Erie algae toxins caused the 2014 Toledo water crisis that affected about 500,000 residents. The toxins also prompted Michigan in November, 2016, to declare portions of Lake Erie's waters impaired.

Lucas County commissioners and Oregon City Council approved resolution seeking the impairment destination in 2016.

Council's vote on the matter came on the same day that the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department lifted a recreational health advisory for the Maumee River. The advisory was put in place Sept. 21 because of a strong algae bloom.

The department said in a release the blue-green algae bloom "is no longer present." Health officials urged citizens to be alert to signs of algae blooms in public bodies of water.

Council also voted 11-0 Tuesday to sell the blighted Nasby Building downtown. Councilman Yvonne Harper was not present for that vote.

The Hicks-Hudson administration negotiated the deal to sell the city-owned vacant building at the southwest corner of Huron Street and Madison Avenue to a company called Nasby LLC for \$10. If the company has not completed renovations into a planned mixed-used development with commercial, residential, and office space within five years, it must pay the city \$250,000.

The deal requires the city to acquire the adjacent properties at 611 and 617 Madison Ave. — which includes the bus station on the east side of North Erie Street owned by the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority — and include those in the sale to Nasby LLC, according to the council ordinance.

"This is a project that is going to add significantly to the redevelopment of downtown," Mr. Ujvagi said.

"It's time for the city to hand it over to someone who will make a success out of it," he said.

In other business, council:

- Voted 12-0 to set aside \$4 million in an escrow account to pay off debt on the LaSalle Apartments building downtown. The city of Toledo sold bonds in the late 1990s to help finance the Macy's redevelopment. The city received \$4.53 million when the building was sold in 2014 since it was the first lien holder. The city owes \$4.25 million on the building.
- Hired two law firms, Climaco, Wilcox, Peca & Garofoli Co., LPA; and Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, to sue for opioid-related costs.
- Approved the 2017 municipal art plan agreement with the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo, which allocates \$213,662 from the city's capital improvement budget.
- Renewed the city's 10-year lease with the Frederick Douglass Community Center for \$10 a year.

Staff writer Jay Skebba contributed.

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