

Council says yes to life rings, longer ladders for breakwater

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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<http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/051613/breakSM.png>

Aldermen OK agreement with Army Corps that allows city to install safety devices

Life rings and ladder extensions are expected to be installed along Port Washington's breakwater in the coming weeks.

With little comment, the Common Council on Tuesday approved a five-year license agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers that allows the city to install safety devices along the federally owned breakwater.



Additional life rings, as well as signs, are expected to be installed on the city's north and south beaches.

There is no limit on the number of safety devices that can be installed, although the city is responsible to maintain them, City Attorney Eric Eberhardt said.

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In addition to the ladder extensions and life rings, other devices that could be installed on the breakwater are throw bags, emergency call boxes and safety signs.

The agreement also calls for the city to maintain the life rings and ladder extensions — needed because the current ladders on the breakwater do not reach the water and are missing rungs — and to have a \$2 million liability insurance policy in place to cover any claims.

The marina and parks and recreation staff will check daily to make sure the life jackets and ladders are in place, Mayor Tom Mlada said, and reserve police officers will check each week to make sure the jackets are functional.

The fire department's dive team has also agreed to check on the ladder extensions, officials said.

"We're not talking about a lot of time out of someone's day," Ald. Dan Becker said, noting the equipment checks will be incorporated into the employee's workday.

The licensing agreement, which has already been approved by the Army Corps, is similar to those approved by other lakefront communities, Eberhardt said.

"We're not doing anything different than other communities have done," Becker said. Installing the life rings and ladder extensions is the latest step in a multi-pronged waterfront safety plan created after Port Washington teenager Tyler Buczek drowned last September.

The city's Waterfront Safety Committee, formed in the aftermath of the drowning, has held several beach safety classes and is in the process of erecting informational signs at the north and south beaches.

The committee is continuing to do fundraising to pay for the safety devices and other initiatives, including 911 call boxes, a camera system and WiFi along the lakefront.