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Nature center takes up city's offer, removes pilings that created lakefront eyesore

The Port Washington lakefront is significantly less crowded now that Riveredge Nature Center has removed many of the old piers that littered the marina parking lot.

There were only about seven piers left in the lot Monday morning, Harbormaster Dennis Cherny said.

"About 99% of them are gone," he said. "The rest is likely to be gone in little or no time."

The pilings that were also in the parking lot are being removed by Port Recycling, Cherny added, noting the firm is taking a load every day.

That news was welcomed Tuesday by aldermen who for the last month have complained that the debris was littering the lakefront.

"It looks much better with a lot of the debris gone," Ald. Paul Neumyer said.

The marina contractor McMullen and Pitz was responsible for removing the old piers and pilings, Cherny said, but this was not slated to be done until the end of the marina project in spring.

However, Cherny offered the piers and pilings to anyone who wanted them and was willing to remove them from the lakefront.

Having private parties remove the piers will result in a cost savings for the contractor, not the city, Cherny said.

“But we’re benefitting by getting them out of here,” he said.

Riveredge did not take the piers for any specific project, Sanctuary Manager Don Gilmore said.

“We grabbed them on speculation because they were free,” he said.

Some of the piers will likely be used to create a bridge or walkway in a marshy area of the center, Gilmore said, while others will be used to replace existing bridges and walkways over small creeks and wet areas.

“We need to figure out how to get them there and then anchor them,” he said. “They’re not just something people can pick up and move.”

It took Riveredge volunteers two days to move all the piers, Gilmore said, estimating they took roughly 450 feet of piers.

“There’s a fair mount of work to do on them,” he said, noting there are rotted ends to cut off, bumpers and cleats to remove and deck boards to replace.

“They were well built, that’s why there’s some life left in them,” Gilmore said. “If you have to put a few bucks and some time in (to fix them up), it’s worth it.

“If we don’t use them all, maybe somebody else can actually use them.”

THE PILES OF DEBRIS that littered the marina parking lot in Port Washington just weeks ago have been depleted lately. Riveredge Nature Center took many of the old piers to use at its Town of Saukville property, and Port Recycling has claimed many of the pilings. Press file photo