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ALERT

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Marina moves ahead without state

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A Team Elmer's front-loader drives past a boat at Elmwood Marina in Traverse City on Thursday.

Record-Eagle/Mike Krebs

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GREILICKVILLE — Elmwood Township faced rough waters for its marina project after the state pulled part of its grant funding, but work is sailing ahead.

Township trustees agreed to plug a hole the state Department of Natural Resources left when it yanked back a Waterways Program grant mid-construction, Elmwood Supervisor Jeff Shaw said. That means taking about \$400,000 out of a marina fund to replace what would've been a matching grant.

Elmwood Township isn't alone. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive order in March paused discretionary spending, including on most Department of Natural Resources projects, DNR Waterways Grant Program Manager Paul Petersen said.

Trustees opted in May to push ahead, authorizing general contractor Team Elmer's to finish the two phases, meeting minutes show. The company at that point still had around \$873,000 worth of work remaining, half of which the grant would've reimbursed.

"What could we do? We were 60 percent done so it's not like we could just leave it as a construction zone all summer," Shaw said.

Doing so would mean a big hit to marina revenues, Shaw said.

Instead, the township's \$1.4 million marina fund will keep the project afloat — township Harbormaster Peter Moon said the money comes from slip rentals, launch fees and other marina charges.

Moon said he's hoping the DNR eventually reimburses the township. Taking money from the marina fund could force the township to borrow money for future improvements, like replacing docks that cost about \$1.1 million each.

"I've got to start replacing docks, I've got one that's 26 years old with a life expectancy of 25," he said.

The township's decision to move ahead could risk grant funding, Petersen said. He's working through an internal process to resume grant-funded projects where construction already started or were for emergency purposes. Elmwood Township's project hasn't received the go-ahead to resume yet.

Helping boater access sites like Elmwood's marina is the Waterways Program's mission, Petersen said.

"It's not us against them," he said. "We, yes, because of the state situation, we put a hurt on them but not intentionally."

Phases one and two of the project include repaving about two-thirds of the marina parking lot and building a new harbormaster office that includes public restrooms and a garage, Moon said.

Grant documents put construction costs for both phases at \$1,899,612.

Also included is a fish cleaning station, for which around \$99,000 in Great Lakes Fishery Trust money is still in place, Shaw said — the township's seeking donations for the rest of the roughly \$200,000 total cost.

The work should be done by July 1, Shaw said. The governor's stay-at-home orders restricting construction stopped work for more than two months, and Shaw credited the general contractor for catching up.

A third phase would repave the rest of the parking lot, plus build a new boater's lounge previously reported to cost \$2.1 million.

— Shaw said it's possible this phase might have to wait, but boaters won't be inconvenienced in the meantime.

The marina has moorings for more than 200 boats and a public launch, Moon said.

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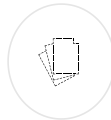


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