

Walled Lake dedicates officer to lake patrol

by Leslie Shepard-Owsley

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In light of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department move to eliminate inland lake patrols beginning this summer due to budget constraints, the Walled Lake City Council has voted to dedicate marine patrols to the city's namesake on holidays and weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

"Walled Lake is the jewel of the city and a lot of people are concerned since there will no longer be sheriff patrols on the it," said Mayor Pro Tem Linda Ackley. "We want to make sure it's safe for everyone involved."

A city marine officer will patrol the lake between noon and 8 p.m. on weekends and holidays, including Memorial Day, Labor Day, and the Fourth of July. The marine officer could begin patrols as early as 10 a.m. if Acting Police Chief Paul Shakinas has his way.

"We'd like to him out earlier if possible," he said.

The sheriff's department offered to provide a Marine Division deputy to patrol the lake at a cost of \$32 per hour, but Shakinas said he could provide the same service for a fraction of that cost.

The city of Novi, situated along the southern shore of the lake, isn't doling out any money toward marine patrols.

"I spoke with (Novi Police) Chief (David) Molloy and he isn't interested one way or another, so our primary focus will be on Walled Lake's end of the lake, unless an emergency pops up," Shakinas said.

After finishing union negotiations on Tuesday, March 16, the city's marine officer is contracted to be paid \$22 per hour.

"Times are hard but many people are staying home instead of going on vacation and want to enjoy the lake," Ackley said. "We need an authority out on the lake to mitigate any problems."

Walled Lake has funded its own Walled Lake/Wolverine Lake Police and Fire Dive Rescue Team, comprised of four police officers and five firefighters, after a man drowned in the lake in 2008.

"We could have been there in 15 minutes, when it takes Oakland County an hour to get out here, and by that point it's basically a recovery vs. a search and rescue," Shakinas said. "Our goal is to be in the water within 15 minutes of the time of the call."

The city's dive team trains throughout the year. All equipment for the team was purchased with drug forfeiture funds, including wet suits, air tanks, and a dive boat.