

EPA leaning toward cap for polluted harbor

'Dredging plan would not work'

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BY CRAIG PETERSON Special to the News-Sun

WAUKEGAN -- Waukegan Mayor Richard Hyde informed the City Council Monday that the EPA is suggesting capping the polluted harbor floor instead of dredging it.

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"Now they're requesting to put a cap on it," Hyde said of the latest communication received from the EPA. "If you put a cap on it, that would not allow any ships coming in with a big propeller to stir up the bottom. Now this is the EPA talking. This isn't the city of Waukegan."

"Clearly, the federal EPA has...determined that their plan to dredge the Waukegan harbor to remove PCBs would not work," 8th Ward Ald. Richard Larsen said.

"Yet their office...supported by some of our elected officials who are supposed to care about Waukegan taxpayers, worked very hard to force this council to approve a plan that would have cost Waukegan taxpayers in excess of \$12 million, a plan that they apparently knew would not work."

Citing a major environmental cleanup at the Yeoman Creek landfill, which cost the city significantly more than the original amount estimated by the EPA, Larson said the local share can increase dramatically, and local bodies have no say on how projects are done.

"They clearly and forcibly, in my opinion, tried to box us into a corner to approve their harbor cleanup plan. Thank God we resisted," Larsen said. "It borders on being a criminal act in my opinion what the EPA tried to do. I think our federal officials should look into the matter."

Presented Monday with a recommendation by the EPA to terminate an agreement to receive more than \$30 million in federal grant for the dredging project, the council instead delayed terminating the agreement and called on the Lake County Board and state of Illinois to remain partners in the city's lakefront redevelopment.

The county has pledged \$2.5 million, while the state has offered \$4 million to subsidize the harbor dredging project.