

BOIS BLANC TOWNSHIP

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DETAILED FOLLOW-UP PRESS RELEASE CHEBOYGAN RIVERFRONT PARCEL BOIS BLANC TOWNSHIP

The Township Board for Bois Blanc Township is pleased to announce that it is in the process of purchasing a property in the City of Cheboygan on the east shore of the Cheboygan River located north of the State Street (US-23) drawbridge. The Township has long sought a transportation center on property on the river, but has been unable to secure such a location in the past.

The property being considered in Cheboygan is the over 4-acre riverfront parcel located immediately adjacent and to the north of where the large fuel tanks are located, somewhat to the south of where the Mackinac icebreaker is often moored. Please see the attached map.

It is anticipated that the Township will eventually develop the riverfront parcel with public wharfage and dockage that will accommodate one or more vehicle and passenger ferries, as well as potentially other watercraft. Such public development could also include a terminal building (for passengers waiting for a ferry or other boat or watercraft), parking areas (both transient and permanent), park features and other public uses. However, at the present time, the Township has no definitive public development plans for the property and any development could occur substantially in the future.

The Township Board for Bois Blanc Township believes that the purchase of the riverfront property would be a prudent decision for many reasons. First and foremost, the Township must plan for the future, as would any reasonable and responsible municipality, especially a municipality that is an island. Vehicle and passenger ferry service is the transportation life line for Bois Blanc Island. Without a regular, safe and convenient vehicle ferry service, Island residents and property owners would likely suffer severely in terms of safety, property values, convenience and peace of mind. A significant interruption in ferry service would cripple the Island, including negatively impacting property values, greatly inconveniencing Island property owners, residents and guests and endangering public safety should a health emergency arise.

Currently, the Township owns, operates and controls most of the property and facilities comprising the ferry landing and marina on the south shore of the Island. At present, the Township does not own, control or operate any river property within the City of Cheboygan. Furthermore, it is not clear for how long into the future the drawbridge on the river at State Street will be operated free of charge to river users on a 24-hour, 7-day basis. Should the operating policy for the drawbridge change



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in the future (so that it either operates on a limited basis, charges frequent users a fee or other policy change), that could adversely affect the frequency and cost of ferry service to and from the Island. Also, there are two other concerns about the drawbridge. First, if the drawbridge were to be down and inoperable for any significant period of time, it could prevent the existing vehicle ferry from accessing Bois Blanc Island. It is not clear how and where a temporary makeshift ferry landing north of the drawbridge could be arranged on short notice. Second, the current vehicle ferry for the Island accounts for approximately 90% or more of the times that the drawbridge must be raised and lowered. Not only does that cause considerable wear and tear to the drawbridge and its mechanical mechanisms, but motorists along State Street (US-23) are greatly inconvenienced due to the large number of added raisings of the drawbridge that occurs due to the current home location of the Island's vehicle ferry. In addition, if for whatever reason in the future the current ferry owner/operator, Plaunt Transportation, is no longer able to stage its ferry boat on its currently privately owned location south of the drawbridge, that could also be problematic. Given that Plaunt Transportation uses a portion of the City's adjacent marina/park, Plaunt Transportation's current parking and staging areas could be drastically diminished if the City were to limit such use of its adjoining public park/marina due to increased tourist demands, commercial development of the waterfront or other reason.

Although not a major consideration, the location of the new river property would shave about three to four minutes off ferry trips to the Island and save on fuel for the ferry boat.

By obtaining a fully developable river parcel north of the drawbridge, the Township could then potentially facilitate ferry boat landings and related facilities on both sides of the South Channel. The Township could minimize any disruption in ferry service that might occur in the future due to a change in the drawbridge policy, should the City prohibit use of its park/marina for ferry service parking and staging, should Plaunt Transportation someday discontinue or curtail ferry service to the Island (for whatever reason) or other any unforeseen future problem with the ferry service.

If the Township does close on the purchase of the riverfront property and eventually develops public facilities on the parcel, Plaunt Transportation would be offered the opportunity to move its ferry service to the improved Township riverfront property. If in the future any other ferry service initiates travel to and from Bois Blanc Island, the Township would likely also offer that ferry service similar privileges at the Township property. However, it is not the Township's intent nor desire to compete with Plaunt Transportation in any fashion regarding ferry services, force Plaunt Transportation to move its current staging location to the Township property in the near future or facilitate the creation of any new or additional ferry services to and from the Island by any competing carrier or carriers. Accordingly, any reasonable municipal planning for the future cannot and should not be dependent upon considerations unique to any one private business. This is about the future transportation needs of Bois Blanc Island, not any specific person, current business or political calculations.

In addition to the importance of planning for the future, there are other significant reasons why the Township decided to pursue the purchase of the riverfront parcel at this time. First, the purchase price is reasonable and modest. The current owner of the land is a benefactor of Bois Blanc Island and has graciously offered the property to the Township on favorable terms. The seller believes that having a Township-owned property on the Cheboygan River north of the drawbridge could be essential to the future transportation needs of the Island. Second, such a prime riverfront location might not be available again to the Township in the future at any price. There are few properties along the north part of the river that can be developed, meet the Township's needs and are (or will be) available for purchase. The parcel is also large enough to meet all of the Township's needs. The Township has attempted to purchase property along the Cheboygan River in the past, but without success. The latest prior attempt was in 2015. After extensive negotiations with the City of Cheboygan (the entity that owned the property involved) in 2015, the parties were unable to reach agreement regarding a purchase.



This is likely a once in a lifetime opportunity for the Island community. Third, the purchase and development of the riverfront parcel by the Township would give the Township an opportunity to work cooperatively with the City of Cheboygan regarding useful redevelopment of the riverfront, which will likely have many other side benefits for the Island. Fourth, the Township Board believes that it is desirable to eventually have an informative and inviting “gateway” to the Island, which constitutes the first major impression that many visitors to the Island will have. A future modest terminal building could serve not only as a way station for ferry passengers, but it could also exhibit displays and help inform visitors about services on the Island, Island history, current weather conditions, special events and other matters. Finally, it appears that there may be grants available in the future regarding any public development of the parcel.

If the Township does obtain title to the river parcel, it is the intent of Township officials to work closely with the Bois Blanc Township Harbor Commission, members of the Island community and Plaut Transportation (as well as City of Cheboygan officials) regarding any development of facilities that would occur on the property. Such input would be essential to the end use for the property.

In summation, the Township Board is excited about the prospect of the Township potentially purchasing this key piece of riverfront property, and believes that it is the responsible and prudent course to take. The Township must plan for the future.

Respectfully submitted,

The Bois Blanc Township Board



Bois Blanc Township – Riverfront Property



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