

Guinta wants dam removed, but neighbors say repair it

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MANCHESTER – Mayor Frank Guinta said yesterday he feels "very strongly" that Black Brook Dam on the West Side should be removed due to flooding concerns.

Tomorrow, the fate of the sagging dam will go before an aldermanic committee, in a meeting called after the state ordered Manchester to either repair it or tear it down.

Guinta said May's flooding, which hit Front Street hard, may have been lessened had Black Brook been flowing on its historic course.

"I do feel very strongly about it," Guinta said. "I know there's mixed emotions on the board, but we have to address the public safety issue."



The fate of the Black Brook Dam on Manchester's West Side will go before an aldermanic committee tomorrow. At issue is the question of whether it should be removed or repaired.

may have already made their decision.

"They get it set in the mind that they want to get rid of it," said Machos, of Omega Street. "But they wouldn't have to spend much money and still make it a pond that would be an asset to the city."

He said May's floods would have occurred regardless of whether the dam was there.

"That's unusual and that would have happened no matter what," Machos said.

Clem Lemire, a retired city parks superintendent, said the dam performed well during the May's storms, despite flooding.

"It held up beautifully," Lemire said last week.

Alderman Mike Garrity of Ward 9, the chairman of the Committee on Community Improvement, said tomorrow's meeting will end with a recommendation on what to do with Maxwell Pond.

"We have to come up with some sort of a solution," said Garrity, who has previously supported repairs.

City parks officials estimate fixing the dam would cost about \$85,000. Tearing it down would be paid 60 percent by the state, with in-kind city work covering the rest.

Alderman Mark Roy of Ward 1 said the city made a mistake last year in not allowing the state to take down the dam, which would have been paid for through grants.

"It will never be what it used to be," Roy said of the pond, where sentiment has built up. "It's going to keep filling and end up being more of a hazard."

Neighbors have long fought destroying the dam, saying they prefer it to be repaired. State and local environmental officials have pushed its removal, which would allow fish to return to the restored brook.

The Department of Environmental Services issued its order after five years of city inaction, characterizing the dam as a "menace to public safety." Among problems cited were a sinkhole, a cracked retaining wall and the lack of an updated maintenance and repair plan.

For 80 years, Henry Machos has lived by Black Brook. He helped harvest ice there and has seen many youths camping on Maxwell Pond's south side.

Machos doesn't want the city to tear down the dam, though he's pessimistic that Manchester leaders