

## PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE IN THE VILLAGE OF SEBEWAING

SITUATED ON SAGINAW BAY IN MICHIGAN'S THUMB REGION, the Village of Sebewaing is home to many farms and agriculture-driven businesses and is known for its great walleye fishing and duck hunting. The Village has rich natural resources that can be enjoyed from the Village's four parks and two campgrounds. However, severe weather events pose a significant risk to coastal communities like Sebewaing.

The Village has experienced increases in the intensity and duration of rainfall, the percentage of precipitation that falls as rain versus snow, and ice jams in the Sebewaing River. At particular risk is the Village's electric and water infrastructure. Weather events will continue to have an impact on Sebewaing's ability to ensure the distribution of water, internet, and electric services to its residents and businesses in a safe, reliable, and environmentally responsible way.

To address these climate impacts, in 2016, the Village of Sebewaing and Sebewaing Light and Water Department (SL&W), a municipally

owned power and water utility, received a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, provided through the Michigan Association of Planning, for the creation of a Local Coastal Resiliency Master Plan. The resiliency planning process allowed the Village to explore opportunities to improve resiliency throughout the community by recommending changes to SL&W operations, types of capital improvements, and updates to Village ordinances and regulations.

One goal that came from the Resiliency Plan was to prevent development in areas that are considered sensitive due to landscape, wildlife, or historical value. To implement this recommendation, the Village applied for additional funding through MAP's Coastal Resilience Initiative in order to hire a consultant to create a policy that will guide the siting and installation of new public utilities and infrastructure. The policy specifically outlines a proactive and sustainable approach to the management of current assets and the siting and installation of new public utilities and infrastructure.

The policy, which was adopted by the Sebewaing Village Council in November of 2017, outlines the procedure the Village and SL&W will follow when publicly-held utilities and infrastructure installations or modifications take place. The policy requires that the 100-year flood zone boundaries are mapped and used for siting purposes. The Village will use the 100-year flood zone boundaries to discourage new development in these sensitive areas. In addition, when siting new public utilities, the Village will provide an opportunity for public comment and questions on the cost, location, and timeline for the installation of the proposed infrastructure. Finally, the policy includes a provision that new electric distribution lines should be installed underground where reasonably feasible and not a health or safety concern.

SL&W is already putting the policy into effect with their Pine Street Engine project. The Pine Street Engines will allow SL&W to continue to provide reliable power in case of an emergency and will help to reduce the Village's carbon emissions. For this project, SL&W used the 100-year flood zone as a guide and plans to site the infrastructure 3 feet outside the mapped flood zone in accordance with the new policy. The Pine Street Engine project has been presented to the public at Village Council meetings, as well as at SL&W monthly meetings.

The Village of Sebewaing, SL&W, and residents are committed to the ongoing planning and implementation of strategies and policies that will make the community more resilient. The proactive efforts taken over the last year (adopting the Resiliency Plan and the policy for siting and installing new public utilities) were a



precursor to the start of a new Master Plan effort. The Master Plan will include the recommendations from the Resiliency Plan, ensuring that resiliency and sustainability are some of the key components considered in the master planning process and future development in the Village of Sebewaing.

For more information about the Village of Sebewaing, the Resiliency Plan, or the Village's policy for siting and the installation of new public utilities and infrastructure, please

contact the Village of Sebewaing at [office@sebewaingmi.gov](mailto:office@sebewaingmi.gov) or visit the website at <http://www.sebewaingmi.gov/>.

**THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY THE VILLAGE OF SEBEWAING, SEBEWAING LIGHT & WATER DEPARTMENT, AND**

**DELTA INSTITUTE.** *The Village of Sebewaing is dedicated to planning for a resilient future and helping residents, business owners, and visitors enjoy the benefits of living in Sebewaing, Michigan. Sebewaing Light and Water is a municipally owned utility, providing safe, reliable and environmentally responsible Electric, Water*

*and Internet Utilities to their customers. Delta Institute is a nonprofit that collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges across the Midwest.*

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