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The Cheboygan River upstream from the Cheboygan Lock & Dam Complex, races under a footbridge toward Lake Huron, April 14. JOHN WISELY/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Planners OK special use for car wash addition

Evan Sasiela
Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

BRIGHTON TWP. — A popular car and pet wash in Livingston County is planning an addition at one of its locations.

The Brighton Township Planning Commission voted April 13 to approve a special land use application and site plan for Vortex Car Wash at 5235 S. Old US-23.

The business is planning a 371-square-foot addition to accommodate larger vehicles in two car bays.

David Le Clair of Livingston Engineering and Joe Pacut, owner of Vortex Car Wash, addressed the Brighton Township Planning Commission during a public hearing April 13.

Le Clair noted the property is the former Gorilla Auto Wash, and that Pacut wants to make improvements to it. He highlighted work Pacut did at Vortex's location at 524 W. Grand River Ave. in Brighton.

"He's done a tremendous job with the facelift of that car wash and would love to do the same for this facility," Le Clair said.

Le Clair said one bay will be an automated drive-through, and the other will be an extended car wash for longer vehicles.

Planning Commissioner Allan Lutes motioned to approve the special land use application with the condition Pacut works on a landscaping plan with Township Planner Kelly Mathews.

See CAR WASH, Page 4A

A mother's intuition guided her to her child in Cheboygan



Byron McCauley
Guest columnist

CHEBOYGAN — Amber Noel didn't want to wait to find out.

On the eve of another round of rain, with flood warnings hanging over the Cheboygan River, she got in her car with her fiancé and drove from Alpena to pick up her 23-year-old daughter, Molly, whose residence is just a few blocks away from the water's edge.

"I didn't want to risk it," Noel said.

"She has no means of transportation out of here. There's nobody else close by. I made the trek today because there was no guarantee I'd be able to get through tomorrow."

By nightfall on April 14, weather forecasters predicted more rain to fall here overnight and possibly cause the enfeebled Cheboygan Lock and Dam Complex to overflow. Emergency officials have asked residents to gather their things that matter to them and be ready to flee to safer areas — just in case.

Noel made a proactive decision in the in-between — the uneasy space between warning and impact. Cheboygan was living in this space — a town waiting. Waiting as rising water tested the

limits of infrastructure. Waiting to see whether preparation was enough. Yards were already taking on water. U.S. 23, which runs along Lake Huron into Cheboygan, was shut down by early evening.

For days, crews have been stacking big sandbags at the dam complex, anticipating a worst-case scenario. They applied engineering solutions to allow more water to flow through.

The anticipation of possible flooding of the Cheboygan River, which cuts through downtown, brought back bad memories of last year's catastrophic March ice story, two restaurant workers told me.

See INTUITION, Page 3A

Hartland Schools honors two for dedication to students

Evan Sasiela
Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Hartland Consolidated Schools has recognized two staff members for their dedication to students and the community.

HCS has named Lauren DePestel as its Teacher of the Year and Bridgette Stanaway as its Support Person of the Year for 2025-26. Both work at Hartland

High School — with DePestel serving as a special education teacher and Stanaway as a paraeducator.

DePestel teaches in a program for students with diverse needs and provides them "with a program built on high expectations, dignity and authentic relationships," according to a HCS news release.

She manages the Peer-to-Peer pro-

See SCHOOLS, Page 4A



Hartland Consolidated Schools has named Lauren DePestel as its Teacher of the Year for 2025-26. From left, Hartland High School Principal James Fitzgerald, Hartland Education Association Teacher of the Year Coordinator Kristin Raap, DePestel and HCS Superintendent Chuck Hughes
PROVIDED BY CHUCK HUGHES



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