



## Quarterback Aidan Chiles ‘means business’ at MSU

SPORTS, 1B

# Lansing State Journal

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Construction crews work at the Brenke Fish Ladder on Aug. 18 in Lansing. The new outdoor mini-amphitheater is expected to open in October. PHOTOS BY NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

# SETTING THE STAGE

## \$3.5M amphitheater at the Brenke Fish Ladder nearing completion

Mike Ellis  
Lansing State Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING — A multimillion renovation of the Brenke Fish Ladder won’t be finished in time for the annual fall Dam Jam in Old Town, but officials expect the project to wrap before the snow flies.

A new outdoor mini-amphitheater is expected to open in October at the Brenke Fish Ladder, bringing a permanent stage and seating for about 350 people on the banks of the Grand River.

The new theater was expected to be home for the annual Dam Jam concert, which is planned for Sept. 25-27 this year, but construction delays mean that won’t happen. The annual concert will instead likely happen at a nearby location yet to be determined, said Laurie Strauss Baumer, president and CEO of the Capital Region Community Foundation.

Dam Jam should, however, be at the new venue in 2026, she said.

The amphitheater is a concrete stage that takes up a bowl-shaped space that was aesthetic, rather than functional, so with a bunch of new concrete, the area now has stadium-style seating with the Grand River visible in a sunken gap between the stage and seating. It’s a much larger stage than before for musicians, theater performances or community events, and has more built-in electricity and sound options for performers.

The \$3.5 million upgrade is funded in part from private fundraising, largely through the Capital Region Community Foundation, with about half the cost being covered by a \$1.7 million state grant given in 2023 from the Legislature. About \$150 million from the state budget was allocated to the region that year, including



\$40 million for a new city hall, \$6.2 million for the Moores Park Pool and \$5 million for the Lansing Center.

The city of Lansing will pay to redo Lansing River Trail paths, lighting and some other infrastructure that was taken down around the fish ladder to do the construction.

The fish ladder was built in 1981 to help fish swimming up the Grand River pass the dam.

The theater and seating are the showpieces but the park itself will also get significant upgrades: Permanent metal instruments, an adult-sized swing that faces the Grand River, a working fireplace and picnic tables will be added.

Lighting throughout the park will illuminate trees,

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**“Most communities with a river flowing through downtown capitalize on that, instead we’ve put our backs to the river. It’s time we face forward and appreciate and capitalize on the asset that is our river.”**

**Laurie Strauss Baumer**, president and CEO of the Capital Region Community Foundation

## 2 dead, 1 critical after crash near downtown

Rachel Greco  
Lansing State Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING - Two people were killed and another was in critical condition after a vehicle struck a utility pole off West Oakland Avenue early on Saturday, Aug. 23.

Police responded to the single-vehicle crash in the 300 block of West Oakland Avenue around 4:30 a.m., the Lansing Police Department said in a statement.

“Preliminary investigation indicates the vehicle struck a utility pole,” Lansing police spokesperson Jordan Gulkis said in the statement. “Alcohol and speed appear to be contributing factors.”

Five people were involved in the crash. Two people, ages 20 and 21, died.

A 29-year-old is in critical condition, Gulkis said. Two others, ages 23 and 33, were in stable condition at a Lansing area hospital.

Police have not released genders or hometowns for anyone involved.

Police were working to determine what led to the crash.

“Accident investigators continue to gather facts related to the events and other factors leading up to the incident,” Gulkis said.

On the morning of Aug. 23, W. Oakland Avenue was closed at Seymour Avenue near the scene of the crash and line crews from Lansing Board of Water & Light were repairing a damaged utility pole.

Contact Reporter Rachel Greco at [rgreco@lsj.com](mailto:rgreco@lsj.com). Follow her on X @GrecoatLSJ .



Lansing Board of Water & Light line workers make repairs to a utility pole damaged in a crash in the 300 block of W. Oakland Avenue in Lansing. ROBERT KILLIPS/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

## Former Mason official gets time served in Indiana sex-sting case

Ken Palmer  
Lansing State Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

BLUFFTON, Ind. — A former local government official who was caught in a child sex sting last year in northern Indiana has been sentenced to time served after accepting a plea bargain.

Seth Waxman, who was vice president of the Mason Planning Commission when he was charged with soliciting a minor but immediately resigned from that post, pleaded guilty to two felony counts in late June, according to records in Wells County Circuit Court. Two other counts, including a count of child solicitation to engage in sexual intercourse, were dismissed.

A judge on Aug. 13 sentenced him to 482 days in prison, with credit for 241 days, officials said. Because Waxman received one day’s credit for every day he served in custody, he was discharged for

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