Toledo may buy land to help with sewage overflow
By Ignazio Messina, Blade Staff Writer, Toledo Blade

The city of Toledo is considering a plan to lease and eventually purchase more than 9 acres downtown to build a facility to control the sewage overflow that contributes to toxic algae in Lake Erie, a deal that would cost taxpayers more than $4 million in the long run.

This land is required to construct a 12 million gallon combined sanitary/​storm sewer overflow storage basin.

The Collins administration asked council Tuesday to review a 20-year agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway for the lease and subsequent purchase of the land to build the basin, which is required by a federal approved consent decree mandating the city to expand its sewer treatment plant, eliminate sanitary sewer overflows, and reduce the number of combined sewer overflows. The overflows allow untreated sewage into the Maumee River, which flows to the lake, feeding the algae blooms that create toxic microcystin.

The city would have to spend $125,000 this year from its sanitary sewer replacement fund for the first of its annual lease payments to Norfolk under the deal.

The Norfolk land, consisting of three parcels, is bounded by Olive Street, Summit Street, Magnolia Street, and the Maumee River.

The Toledo Waterways Initiative — a $521 million overhaul of the city’s sewage plant near Cullen Park in Toledo’s Point Place, as well as the collection of pipes and pumps throughout the metro area that are connected to it — began in 2002. It was the result of the agreement the city reached with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency after years of untreated sewage releases.

Council is expected to vote on the lease-purchase agreement at its meeting Tuesday.

In other business, council could vote next week to set up a fund to accept donations for the city’s police-camera system, commonly called “Sky Cop.” Police Lt. James Brown said business owners, residents, and community groups have requested cameras be installed at various locations. The mounted cameras cost between $3,600 and $6,000, Lieutenant Brown said.