

John Day presses on with projects

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Many John Day projects continue to move forward with minimal delays despite the COVID-19 outbreak.

City Manager Nick Green presented an update to the John Day City Council on April 14 on the many ongoing city projects and their different stages of development, with additional information provided in the meeting agenda.

Street, sidewalk, bridge and trail improvements

• **395 sidewalk extension:** Oregon Department of Transportation is refining their design criteria to extend sidewalks north on Highway 395 based on feedback from property owners. They will hold a public hearing this summer before finalizing the design and going into construction in 2021.

This project is fully funded, and all of the city's match was paid in advance. No additional charges are expected, according to the agenda. However, a portion of the project could be subcontracted through the city, which would reduce the overall project cost, and ODOT would reimburse the city for these expenses.

• **Fourth Street repairs:** GHD was the high scorer of the three design and engineering bids submitted for the project to repair flood damage on Fourth Street. Work was supposed to commence in April, but the project award was delayed slightly due to COVID-19, according to the agenda. The intent is to award the contract this month and have the team begin work when the contract is awarded.

• **Charolais Heights intersection improvements:** City staff began clearing the trees from a lot in preparation for the safer intersection project. The Small City Allotment agreement with Oregon Department of Transportation awarded \$100,000 for the project. The city is working with Sisul engineering to solicit quotes for the

project.

The city will do the regrading and utility relocation this year, and if the project needs to be phased, construction will begin next year on the street improvements, according to the agenda.

Based on the estimated cost of the Fourth Street repairs, the city might not be able to complete the full project this fiscal year because repairing flood-damaged roads have priority over intersection improvements.

• **Oregon Pine bridge improvements:** This project to fix the bridge to the Oregon Pine property is temporarily on hold, pending the outcome of the 2020 BUILD grant, which includes bridge improvements in the scope. This will be a part of the BUILD application.

“We’ve done a lot of additional analysis such as a transportation impact study, some preliminary plats and updated assessment of our bridge condition and our traffic impact that we didn’t have a year ago,” Green said.

• **2020 BUILD grant** that would help fund projects for the Seventh Street Extension, Charolais Heights and Third Street Extension bridge: John Day made it to the final selection round in 2019 but was not awarded the multimillion-dollar federal BUILD grant. However, the city is submitting another application in 2020 with additional data.

The additional data includes a traffic impact assessment for this project and additional engineering and planning details. A proposed hotel and new commercial developments are other new additions to the application, which will help increase the overall impact of the project. The city also received support letters from senators, according to Green.

“We are going to be able to show quite a bit of business expansion even in light of what we’re experiencing with the things we’ve done,” Green said. “I think our application



Contributed image

The site concept for the John Day Innovation Gateway.

gets stronger next year, I think the amount of available funding goes up and hopefully that gets us to victory.”

The city’s overall goal with this application is to complete the local street network to allow for new residential, commercial and industrial development. Applications for the BUILD grant are due May 18.

Innovation Gateway & Riverfront Recreation projects

• **Hotel and event center site development:** The integrated planning team for an effort to build a new hotel is completing their work for the EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance grant, which will be finalized and submitted this month.

• **Wastewater treatment plant:** The city is working through the contracting process to bring Kennedy Jenks and Flagline Engineering onto the design team to complete the necessary analysis to receive USDA Rural Development funding for a new wastewater facility.

The city asked engineering firm Anderson Perry to stop work on the design and procurement of the membrane bioreactor in order to let the financing and the permitting process catch up to the engineering. Green mentioned how the three big pillars in this project are engineering, financing and permitting.

“We need them to come together at the same time. We don’t want a 100% design before we have the funding ready to commit for procure-

ment and before we have a permit to operate it,” Green said. “Rather than have them continue to incur cost for the city on design, I asked them to stop work while we address these questions from the USDA.”

• **Aquatics center:** The planning team is nearly complete with their work on the final draft of a proposal for a new aquatics center. Designs, taxing district information and details on the proposal were released during the City Council meeting on April 15.

During June and July, listening sessions will be held in the communities that would be affected, and action committees will then present the final plan to be recommended to the county, Green said.

• **Integrated park system:** The city has worked on tree thinning and hazardous tree removal, which was performed throughout the Hill Family Park this month and is nearing completion. City staff also updated signage at the Davis Creek Park, and the city is designing parking for the west end of the Seventh Street Complex as part of this project.

The next phase will be finalizing the design and beginning construction for the new bridge between the Hill Family Park and the future Seventh Street Extension, which will be included in the 2020 BUILD grant, according to the agenda.

• **Greenhouse:** Productivity increases at the greenhouse, and market surveys with customers will provide how they like the

product line and evaluate price and demand for each product.

“Right now we’re producing between 200 and 300 heads of lettuce weekly and about 200 of our cherry tomatoes, and that’s off of one row,” Green said. “About a third of our vine crops are under production, another third are planted and growing and another third will come later this year.”

The city is working closely with Chester’s Thriftway to optimize both volume and pricing of lettuce from the greenhouse in their store. The city will present a summary of their findings to the council at the April 28 council meeting.

Downtown/Main Street improvements

• **Downtown parking improvements:** The city will finalize design and bid packages for downtown parking to be included in the 2020 BUILD grant, which are based on prior designs approved by the city council.

• **Len’s Drug renovation:** Len’s Drug has received approval through the planning commission to begin construction of their proposed site design package.

Housing

• **Weaver building:** Tyler Sheedy purchased the Weaver building northwest of the intersections of highways 26 and 395 on Nov. 27. All development agreements have been signed. Development timeline is driven by the Sheedys, and improvements are expected to be complete within five years.

• **Phase 2 of Ironwood Estates:** The city continues to coordinate for street improvements to allow for the expansion of housing in Ironwood Estates, according to the agenda. These street improvements were included in the 2019 BUILD grant and may be included in the 2020 BUILD grant.

• **Mahogany Ridge:** Mahogany Ridge Properties acquired Strawberry View Estates, and the owners are working

with city engineers to develop designs that could be included in the 2020 BUILD grant. These designs will be reviewed by the city council prior to submission.

• **Code enforcement:** The city will continue to pursue code enforcement for housing and floodplain development violations, while also working with developers to help them understand the importance of applying for permits before they begin construction, according to the agenda.

The agenda added that this is particularly important for the FEMA special flood hazard areas and the landslide hazard areas in the community as these land use designations are regulated at the local, state and federal levels and are subject to state and federal audits.

Intergovernmental Projects

• **Broadband expansion:** The city continues to work with internet service providers and the state broadband office to expand broadband coverage in the area. The EDA grant includes a full fiber buildout to each premise in John Day and to the remaining public facilities that are not connected to the Grant County Digital Network today.

• **Oregon RAIN:** Stephanie LeQuiou was hired as the rural venture catalyst for Oregon RAIN in the region. She has been working with local businesses and entrepreneurs to give support and information for help.

• **County fairgrounds project:** EcoNorthwest completed a draft of the fairgrounds market assessment in March. This assessment will be refined based on stakeholder feedback, according to the agenda. The site concept work has begun to align the market assessment and the fairgrounds’ strategy with potential land use changes and developments at the property.

• **Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site:** The city is coordinating closely with the Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department to develop plans for a new interpretive center.

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