

Thoughts sought on street project

Street project

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multi-family and commercial rates, \$4 per month to the 33 irrigation accounts and \$20 per month to the city's two industrial accounts.

If enacted total city utility bills would increase 9.4 percent and the annual cost to Ephrata households and businesses would be an additional \$96 per year.

In addition to providing sufficient revenue to make the loan payments, the rate increase will also allow the city to set aside money for future upgrades.

A second key to the financing package for the project is a 15 percent commitment in matching funds by the city which would set the interest rate on the loan at .65 percent.

Based on council discussion of the proposal, the matching funds, totaling \$1,350,000, will be taken from the city's cash reserves.

As outlined by the Citizen

Street Commission in presentations to the council, the improvements will be done in phases over a four-year period with the first phase to begin in May 2008 when the Trust Fund Loan becomes available.

The city has already received a preconstruction loan for the project and is in the process of doing the engineering and preparing the drawings in preparation for the start of construction.

As explained by the commission the city will be able to address two problems—aging waterlines and deteriorating residential streets—in a single project that would not be feasible without the low interest trust fund loan.

Following the open house the council will act on an Ephrata Planning Commission recommendation for approval of a preliminary plat for the Prairie Bluff residential development at the northeast corner of Ephrata Heights.

The planning commission recommended approval of the preliminary plat following a public hearing.

The proposal is for 233 residential lots on 66.25 acres located north of Third Northeast between D Northeast and the Port of Ephrata property.

The council decision will be based on a closed record of the planning commission action with no new testimony or information allowed to be introduced.

On the council's consent agenda, council members will be asked to approve operation of three fireworks stands over the July 4th holiday.

Applications have been received from J&M Liquidators for a stand located in the Moore Furniture parking lot and from TNT Fireworks for two stands, one located in the Ephrata Safeway parking lot and the other in the Ephrata Wal-Mart parking lot.

So far little comment received

BY JOE DENNIS
of the Journal

EPHRATA — City officials and members of the Ephrata Citizen Street Commission are eagerly waiting for Wednesday for Wednesday to find out how well they have explained their plan for a comprehensive waterline and residential street reconstruction project.

But even more importantly, how the public feels about the plan and the proposed increase in water rates that is required to fund it.

An open house in the Ephrata City Hall council chambers has been scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday prior to the 7 p.m. council meeting to give interested citizens a chance to ask questions and let officials know how they feel about the project, its scope and cost.

City administrator Wes Crago said the plan for conducting the open house is to make it informal, giving citizens a chance to meet one-on-one with council members, citizen street commission members and city staff to ask questions and make their feelings known.

Wednesday's open house is the first of two planned by the city, with a second to be held prior to the council meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 19.

"We will have multiple computers and materials available to explain the scope of the project, how it will be paid for and why it is needed," Crago said, pointing out that to date very little public comment on the proposal has been received by the city.

The proposal, worked out by the citizen street commission during a series of meetings since the group's formation in October 2005, calls for a \$9 million project financed through a Washington Public Works Trust Fund Loan, to be repaid over a 20-year period through an increase in water rates the council has committed itself to passing this fall after final approval of the Public Works Trust Fund Loan is received.

Following council action the rate increase of \$8 per month to residential,

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