

Blasting planned for water line project

By Jeanne Davant

Up to 10 or 11 dynamite blasts are planned late this month and into September as part of a project to replace a water line between the water treatment plant and the Mesa water tank.

But the blasts will not be big bangs and should be barely perceptible to nearby residents, said Jimmy Stephens, project manager for K.R. Swerdfeger Construction, which is in charge of the project.

The pipe that currently runs between, the plant and the tank has a tendency to freeze because it is not set deep enough, Stephens told Manitou Springs City Council on Tuesday night. The new line will have a larger diameter and will be installed deeper.

People usually think of blasting in terms of strip mining explosions taking off the side of a mountain, Stephens said.

"That's not going to happen," he said. The charges that will be set off to excavate a trench for the new pipe will spread debris not more than 10 feet sideways or five feet in the air. Each blast will last less than a second and create about 130 dB of noise.

Stephens said a maximum of 10 or 11 charges would be set off during a two-week period between Aug. 30 and Sept 10 to excavate the 1,100-foot-long trench. The closest home to the blast area is about half a mile away.

"They may hear our drills, but they probably won't even hear the explosives go off," said Jim Knoll, vice president of field operations for Yenter Companies, which will do the blasting.

The biggest concern is a footpath near the tank, although it is not well traveled. The blast area, however, will be secured and fenced in, Knoll said.

Swerdfeger plans to install a new line on top of the ground that will be tested and functional before blasting destroys the old line, Stephens said. The entire project will take five to six weeks.

Mayor Marc Snyder asked Knoll to put up signs stating the dates of the blast and to take other actions to give nearby residents 24 hours' notice that the blasting will occur.

Council also discussed another project that could affect residents and businesses: the next phase of the water and sewer line replacements paid for by federal stimulus funds.

Snyder said he had heard concerns from business owners that Manitou Avenue would be torn up in September.

"Can we do this after tourist season?" Snyder asked. "The season really runs through September and into October. We don't want to close off Manitou Avenue and make it more difficult for folks."

Public Works Director Bruno Pothier said that two lanes of the avenue—one lane in each direction—will remain open during the work, which will occur between Subway and Jerry's Auto.

Council wants opinions on capital projects

Does your street need repairs? Do you have other ideas for capital improvement projects the city needs?

Manitou Springs City Council will hold a public hearing at its Aug. 17 regular meeting to talk about capital improvements projects.

"We're inviting people to come in and suggest improvements," Deputy City Manager Mike Leslie said.

The meeting is part of the capital improvements budget process.

Council will also discuss capital improvements and a five-year capital improvements plan at its work session Tuesday. For more information, call 685-4398.

The work being done now on El Paso Boulevard will be completed by then so it can accommodate overflow traffic. Access to businesses will be kept open.

Snyder said he also has had complaints about excessive traffic backing up on Ruxton Avenue this year.

"The circle may be causing difficulties," he said.

Snyder said he would soon be attending a meeting of a regional steering committee for public transportation.

"Now may be an opportune time to see if we can't fashion some kind of seasonal transportation to get people up into Ruxton Canyon," Snyder said. "I would love to see additional bus lines in the summer from downtown Colorado Springs up to the Cog Railway to alleviate some of the congestion we've experienced this summer."

"I hope we can look outside the box on the roundabout," Councilman Matt Carpenter said.

The roundabout has caused problems for Colorado Springs city buses, which can't make it around the circle, Deputy City Administrator Mike Leslie said.

As a result, "they want to cut the Canon-Park Avenue route," he said. The transit company has investigated running a bus shorter than the 40-footers currently used on the route and is considering adding three stops on Manitou Avenue.

In addition, Mountain Metropolitan Transit "is enthused about a circulator," Leslie said. "They've talked about running all the way to the west arch and building some sort of turnaround there sometime in the future."

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