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Oakwood to move forward on sewer project

Oakwood is edging toward a sewer project that would mainly serve an apartment complex where a septic drain field has been failing for years.

City Council has approved several actions that would set the project in motion, including engineering work that's expected to take about 30 days.

"Hopefully, by the end of the year, we'll be able to get it under construction," City Manager Stan Brown said.

The project at the 20-unit Hidden Valley complex off McClure Drive would involve laying about 1,400 feet of gravity and force-main lines and construction of a pump station.

The work is estimated to cost \$223,686, according to state paperwork, but Brown said the city's share depends on actual project costs.

"We'll be coming back to (the council) before we put it out to bid," Brown said. "And we'll try to work out some ways that it can be paid — maybe some in-kind payment with land transfers and things like that."

The project also calls for abandoning the septic system, using available land for "neighborhood park space," Brown said.

To offset costs, the city has received a \$50,000 "Immediate Threat and Danger" grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

DCA's website says the program provides matching money "for community development activities having a particular urgency when existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community."

Local money must make up at least 10 percent of project costs. The DCA reserves \$200,000 grants for "major disasters," the website states.

"When you look at the fact that this is serving low- to moderate-income (residents), there are grant funds out there," Brown said in May, when he first spoke to the council about the issue.

"I have met with the property owners," he said at the time.

"They recognize that there's a need to do something, and we've laid out some parameters of a partnership of how we could make this thing happen.

"Basically, they would make up the difference in cost ... but it might be we would take the lead in this," he said. "To try to get four property owners to work together on this, to hire an engineer and do all this, I don't think you would get the result we are after."

Connecting the complex to sewer would involve a couple of manholes, including one across the street from the complex.

The project, which could be finished by late February or early March, does have some expansion potential.

"While we're going through the engineering, if there are other parties that want to participate, we may let them (do so) financially," Brown said.

"Right now, I don't foresee anybody wanting to participate."

The grant, which will be administered by the Gainesville-based Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, is good through Oct. 9, 2014.