

City Business

by Michael Leamons

As mentioned in last week's article, one of Monday night's agenda items was to consider allocating funds to repave a section of one of the City's streets. When interviewing Council members regarding their goals for the City, virtually all mentioned the priority of making some headway with the City streets.

In the past, a section of Pecan Street between Grubbs and College Streets had been identified both as one of the most travelled and as one of the most deteriorated streets in town. Additionally, some of the utility lines under that portion of Pecan Street have already been replaced, and there aren't any plans to lay any new lines.

The above section of Pecan Street needs a lot of attention. The ditches are virtually non-existent, and the culverts are clogged. Somewhere along the way, utility poles were installed where the ditch on the west side of the street ought to be.

For pavement to hold up, good drainage is a must. Consequently, it is critical the above drainage deficiencies be addressed before the street is resurfaced. Also, there isn't much, if any, base under the current pavement, so the roadway needs to be stabilized before new chip seal is applied.

Taking the above into consideration, a preliminary cost estimate of \$97,500 was submitted to the Council for the following scope of work: 1. The City will work with the utility companies to get their poles moved out of the ditch; 2. The clogged culverts will be removed and the ditches will be pulled (this should add about 5' of width to the street); 3. Cowboy culverts, or concrete swales, will be installed in place of the culverts; 4. Using the City's asphalt zipper, staff will grind up the existing asphalt, and the contractor will mix in Portland, fly ash or lime and compact the surface to stabilize the road bed; and, 5. The contractor will then apply two coats of chip seal.

The questions before the Council were, "Do you want to pursue the above outlined project, and, if so, how do you propose to pay for it?"

Last week, I had reported how about \$24,000 remained in the Pete Jenkins Account. What I didn't realize is that, previously, some of the Pete Jenkins Fund had been temporarily diverted into the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Account. With some grants, the City is awarded funds to pay the contractor's bills before the contractor is paid. With other grants, the City has to pay the contractor, and then submit a request for reimbursement.

The SRTS Grant, which enabled last year's sidewalk construction, was of the second type; consequently, the City had to come up with money to pay the contractor until the reimbursements were received. A total of \$191,247 of the Pete Jenkins bequest ended up in the SRTS account. Once the City receives all the reimbursements connected with the SRTS project, those funds will be available for other uses.

The Council decided to pursue the above proposed Pecan Street project and to pay for it by adding \$80,000 of the funds in the SRTS account and the \$10,655 recently received from TML for some of the losses connected with the collapsed well to the existing paving budget. (A larger project wasn't proposed, because some of the funds in the SRTS account need to be retained to help cover the City's operational reserve and cash flow requirements and another SRTS project may be undertaken in the future.)

The part of Pecan Street under consideration represents a very small piece of the City's street system. Consequently, the proposed project is only a baby step towards addressing the maintenance needs of Hico's streets. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction.

May God bless the City of Hico.