

Grimes Main Street updates a priority project

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City anticipates redevelopment of the area will cost an estimated \$3 million.

The anticipated redevelopment of Southeast Main Street in Grimes will cost an estimated \$3 million; how much of that cost will be assessed to area residents has yet to be determined, city officials said this week.

A decision on assessments will need to be decided in the next few months, City Administrator Kelley Brown said this week. It is still a work in progress.

Main Street improvements are one of the city's priority projects as the Grimes City Council sets its budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year. Improvements have already been budgeted in the capital programs fund and debt service levy.

Construction between Southeast Second and Sixth streets, an area known as the Governors District, is expected to begin in the spring. It is unknown how much of the project will be completed, or paid for, in the current budget year that ends June 30.

The work will include renovated street parking, beautification projects, and improvements to water, sanitary sewer and utilities.

City departments presented their budget requests to the council in January. As a starting point toward setting the budget, city staff was given the direction to maintain the current tax rate of \$12.91 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, Brown said.

The city's taxable valuation increased by 8.5 percent from last year, from approximately \$412 million to \$447 million, Brown said. The city does not need to raise taxes because of the Main Street project, but city officials can't reduce the rate because of the city's debt service levy.

Southeast Main Street has "been on someone's 'list of items to be done' for the last 15 years," Mayor Tom Armstrong said.

The road is in disrepair, he said, and water and sanitary sewer lines need to be replaced with bigger pipes to better serve the area.

"The hope is to spur some development in the area," Armstrong said.

The Main Street project is the city's costliest expected expense for the coming year, but other maintenance items and projects the city hopes to complete will reach nearly \$600,000.

Other projects to be discussed in future budget meetings are:

- Staffing. Armstrong wants to explore whether the city has adequate staffing in all areas.

- Maintenance and seeding at a cost of approximately \$12,000 for several grassy areas at the North Sports Complex, located at Southeast Sixth and James streets.
- The need to purchase a plow truck, which will cost approximately \$145,000 and currently is not in the budget.

Expansion of the water supply in Grimes has also become a priority discussion due to last year's drought, city officials said.

Brown said she knows there will be some budget effects, but does not know what they are at this time.

Grimes' three shallow wells pumped a record of 400 million gallons for its 8,500 customers last year, said Steven Robinette, lead operator of Grimes Water and Wastewater.

Expanding the city's water supply includes the options of changing rates to increase the output of the current water plant, drilling another well, and operating an old water treatment plant that went offline in 2001.

"Included with these options we would implement a more stringent water conservation plan," Robinette said.

The city council will have a public hearing on the budget March 12. The budget must be certified with the county March 15.