Duke sewer project on schedule for June completion

BY ANDREW MOORE
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SENECA — The Duke sewer project, seen by Seneca and Oconee County officials as a catalyst to future development along S.C. Highway 130, is expected to be completed by its June deadline.

Seneca Utilities Director Bob Faires said Wednesday that a funding shortfall earlier this year was not unexpected.

In January, Tugaloo Pipeline of Westminster submitted a low bid of $1,066,000 on the final phase of the project, which provides a nine-mile sewer connection between Duke Energy in Salem and Seneca's wastewater treatment site.

The bid exceeded the $1 million budget for the last phase, which is being paid for by Oconee County, and the tab went even higher when engineering costs were added to the equation.

"We purposely over-designed, and planned on getting as much out of $1 million as possible," Faires said. "We over-designed by as much as 50 percent, hoping we could get most of it under that $1 million mark. We pared back to meet budget, to get the most bang for our buck."

Under its agreement with Duke Energy, which is paying for the bulk of the nearly $6 million project, Seneca Light and Water must pay for maintenance.

While work was slightly delayed last month waiting for equipment to bore at the intersection of U.S. 123 and S.C. Highway 130, the project timeline was not significantly effected, Faires said. In lieu of working at that site, they finished project work in the Newry area, where businesses are looking to develop properties. The work done at Broadway Street in the mill village did not tie into the main line already laid along 130 but is a part of the broader Duke sewer project, Faires said.

The county pitched in $1 million to the project in hopes of spurring economic development. When businesses and property owners do tie into the new line, they will have to pay a capital recovery based on usage to Seneca, which will be passed on to Oconee County until its $1 million has been recouped. There will also be a charge of $1 per 1,000 gallons of usage to pay back the county's investment.

Faires said the completion deadline of May 31 should be met.

andrew@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6684