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Chadrad Communications, Inc.
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601
E-mail: kcsr@chadrad.com



(Neb.)-Chadron Storm Water Project Moves Into The Next Phase  [Listen](#)

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 04/17/2012 11:55 AM

(CHADRON)-The Chadron city council deliberated long and hard over the decision to enter the initial phase of the storm water project with the Leo A. Daly engineering firm. All agreed something needed to be done, but members Jim Mapes and Levi Grant were not sure they were ready to commit the cost of the initial phase, \$190,000, to the Daly company when they weren't sure they were in favor of a \$7.5 million dollar project looming in the future.

Grant said he worries that all the city's funds could be drained on one project. "If it was \$4 million, we could probably get it paid off and then do some other streets," said Grant. "But if we use our LB840 money, the ½ percent, and put all our eggs into one basket, we're only going to fix that section of town maybe for 20 years. That's my biggest fear."

Mayor Karin Fischer and city building/zoning official Janet Johnson reminded members that the \$6.3 million estimate from Daly is a worst case scenario. Member Bill Barth said it's hard to say at this stage how much is even wrong or will need upgraded. He likened the situation to that of a car with engine trouble. "Our 'service engine soon' light came on," he said. "We know we have a problem. We don't know exactly what that problem is for sure, and by doing this study and seeing what our infrastructure looks like, we'll have some facts to work with. We need to do something. We can either ignore it and hope that nothing seriously goes wrong and take the chance. Or we can go in and have it checked out, and we may find out that we don't have as severe a problem as we think we might have."

Both Johnson and public works director Milo Rust spoke on behalf of moving into the initial phase in order to better assess the situation. Street superintendent Terry Birnbaum says either way the council decided, it was time to make some decisions, either step on the brakes or keep moving forward.

Council member Grant eventually agreed that at least knowing the extent of the problem was important, even though either way involves a risk. "We'll just have to see after the study whether it's going to be \$8 million or whether it's going to be \$4 million," he said. "That's why I voted just to get our big toe wet. That still doesn't mean we're going to do the project, it just means we're going to know the perimeters of the project. It's gambling, no matter how you look at it. It's gambling, because like Mr. Mapes said, we don't know that the state is going to run the highway through or not, but in order to get any federal money or anything, we have to have an engineering study done."

The council voted 5-0 in favor of proceeding into the initial phase of the project. That phase will include the collection of technical information, meetings with city staff, property owners, and the general public, a topographic survey of Chadron streets and pipes, and a preliminary engineering design based on what is discovered.

(Questions? Comments? E-mail roxie@chadrad.com.)

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