

**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

Costs for a number of city public works projects were discussed with Kent Cordes of Miller & Associates at last week's city council meeting.

Paving projects on East 5th and East 9th Sts., the laying of a new water main between 7th and 11th Sts. on Broadway and a new lift station at Campbell Park were among the work they discussed at the March 9 meeting.

The city and engineer are working out details, as well, on Miller & Associate's charges for their work on the projects. Another look at the engineer's contract will take place at the council's March 23 meeting.

Miller & Associates was hired at the meeting to be the grant writer and administrator for a drainage project in the Holland Street/Schroeder Park area, if a Department of Economic Development public works grant is awarded.

Leslie Carlholm, the city's economic development director, said "it's a long shot," but there is a possibility of getting such a grant for the drainage work in that area.

The council has been discussing drainage problems there and in other parts of town for several years, and have considered several options.

Cordes told the council there would be more of a chance to get the grant if the city commits to a 50 percent match versus a 25 percent match on the project.

Miller & Associates' contract states if the grant is not awarded, their firm will not charge the city anything for the grant writing.

Council members were to study the options for drainage there and decide on a plan by the March 23 meeting, so Miller & Associates can proceed with the grant application.

Council President Doug Gaswick said he wasn't in favor of spending a lot of money in these times, but if a 50 percent grant for the Holland St./Schroeder Park drainage could be received, it might be worthy to go ahead with it.

While there may be other drainage concerns in the city, the Holland St. project is the only one that fits into the requirements for this particular grant, Carlholm noted.

That's because that southeast part of the city is within the city's "substandard and blight" designation, one of the grant requirements.

In a related area, as the council discussed the paving projects in the city's One and Six Year Street Plan, Gaswick noted his concerns with the deterioration of East 12th St.

"It's going down fast," he said and suggested it might be included in the one-year priority plan.

Bids have not gone out on any of the proposed projects. Cordes did give some estimates, however.

The paving/resurfacing of 5th and 9th Sts., could run between \$800,000 and \$966,000, while the lift station and water connection project, combined, are estimated at around \$500,000.

#### **□ Other council business**

Fire department and EMS personnel were at the meeting to discuss progress on the emergency services building plans. The 50 x 70 building is planned for the site where the old grade school

building between 7th and 8th Sts., on Broadway was torn down last fall. Greg Koellner and Deb Hayes reported on a recent meeting with a USDA representative about possible grant funds. A USDA grant could provide 15 percent in funds, and the official also discussed the possibility of federal stimulus money for the project. However, to be considered for the stimulus funds, the project must be “shovel-ready” by July 1, which may be difficult, Koellner said. The IVFD and EMS have opted not to include a storm shelter in the building. Meeting the requirements to access FEMA grant money would add considerable overall cost to the project, Koellner said. A final payment of \$21,647.70 was approved for Maguire Iron, the firm that repainted the city’s water tower. Public Works Director Pat Davison said the light on top of the water tower has not worked since the project was completed, which he doesn’t believe is related to the company’s work. Electricity is running okay at the site, so it may just be due to burned-out bulbs or some other minor complication.

City employees will be getting some added benefits soon, and at a lower cost to the budget. Disability insurance, a new benefit, and an increase in their life insurance coverage (from \$30,000 to \$50,000) will be added to full-time employees’ benefits package. Even with adding the additional coverage, City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said the city will save about \$8,000 a year. A big reason for that is the city’s switch to a new administrator, RCI of Scottsbluff, to manage the city’s self-funding health insurance policy, which council members approved last week. The council selected the bid from One America for the additional disability and life coverage from a slate of several bidders. The city’s previous carrier for the life insurance coverage was Reliance Standard. A low amount of claims in recent years within the city’s self-funded health insurance plan has also meant no rate increases for the past four to five years, Leyland said.