

SOUTH BELOIT BREAKS GROUND FOR SEWER PLANT EXPANSION

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Clint Wolf/Beloit Daily News South Beloit city officials, as well as Winnebago County Board members and engineers from Fehr Graham, dig into the ground at the South Beloit Wastewater Treatment Plant Friday to mark the beginning of an expansion and improvement project for the plant.

SOUTH BELOIT - A groundbreaking ceremony marked the beginning of a \$34 million wastewater treatment plant expansion and renovation project Friday.

City, county and state officials gathered at the existing South Beloit wastewater treatment plant at 100 Perry Ave. to outline the project and explain its importance to the community and the region.

"Today is a big deal," said South Beloit Mayor Ted Rehl. "It is about all the hard work that was done by previous councils and the present council."

Rehl said the current council decided to move forward with the project, but it was not an easy decision. The council members weighed the need to update the facility with the cost of the project, which is the largest the city has ever undertaken.

The South Beloit Wastewater Treatment Plant was constructed in 1955 with expansions in 1968, 1977 and 1986. Since it has been nearly 30 years since any major improvements have been made, the plant has experienced a variety of equipment problems.

In order to do the project, the city had to get a loan from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The loan amount was \$39,753,000, which includes engineering costs. The total cost to the city over 30 years at a projected interest rate of 1.32 percent would be \$48,271,581. The city will make two payments a year of \$804,526 on the loan. In September of last year, the city started initiating a series of sewer rate increases which are projected to continue until the year 2029 if needed.

River City Construction, based in Peoria, was awarded the contract to do the wastewater treatment plant project. J.R. Peterson of River City said the construction is scheduled to start in South Beloit in the next few weeks. He said the company also currently is working on another sewer plant expansion in Oswego, Illinois, which is a \$90 million project for the Fox Metro Water Reclamation District.

Brad Klisares, also of River City, said the South Beloit project is expected to take two years to complete.

"The biggest challenge will be to not impede the existing operations. To do that, we have planned a multi-phase operation," he said.

He said the crews from River City will be in daily contact with the staff of the wastewater treatment plant, as well as with the city engineering firm, Fehr Graham, to make sure operations of the plant are not interrupted during the construction.

It is estimated 20 to 30 construction workers will be employed during the course of the project.

Jeff Reininger, South Beloit Public Works Superintendent, said the current average daily capacity of the plant is about 3 million gallons a day. That capacity will not change once the project is complete, but the improvements planned for the plant will make it easier and less expensive to expand the plant in the future.