

## **2008 to be busy with capital improvements**

**By RUFFIN PREVOST**  
**Gazette Wyoming Bureau**

CODY - The new year will see planning continue and construction begin on more than \$100 million worth of public and private capital improvement projects around the Bighorn Basin.

Some projects will be completed in 2008, while others will either remain in the planning or fundraising stage, or begin construction with projected completion dates in 2009 or later.

In Powell, backers of a planned city-owned fiber optic telecommunications network expect parties to soon sign closing documents for that project's financing.

If funding and construction for the privately financed \$6.5 million project happen according to schedule, it could be completed by August.

Basin telecommunications company TCT West will serve as the anchor service provider for the network, offering phone, television and ultra-high-speed Internet services over a single line.

### **Fiber optic plan for Cody**

TCT has also reached an agreement with Cody for a fiber optic network franchise, although it has not disclosed how or when any network there would be financed or built.

Cody City Administrator Andy Whiteman said details of the franchise agreement will be discussed at a Jan. 15 city council meeting.

Big Horn Basin Ethanol announced in November a lease agreement with Bronte Renewables of Ontario that could see the Canadian firm build a \$45 million ethanol plant in Greybull.

Funding for the project could be available in March, with construction scheduled to start by July and finish in summer 2009.

Tom Johnson, BHBE president, has said the plant would produce up to 25 million gallons of ethanol a year and employ 33 full-time workers.

Architects are expected to complete final designs by May for a planned municipal pool in Powell. The City Council will then decide on several options to be packaged as bid alternatives.

Funded through a countywide optional 1-cent capital facilities sales tax, the project was estimated at \$7 million but is likely to cost \$8.5 million. Private donations and in-kind contributions from the city are expected to cover the additional costs.

### **Pool work to begin**

Pool construction will begin sometime this year at Homesteader Park and will finish in 2009.

Partially funded by the same sales tax is the renovation of the Park County Complex ground floor for use as the new Cody Library.

Work has begun on the \$5.8 million project, funded through a combination of sales taxes, a State Loan and Investment Board grant and private funds. Construction is expected to finish this fall.

### **Infrastructure updates**

A number of infrastructure projects are on the drawing board for Cody, with the focus on water, sewer and road construction.

A \$2 million rehabilitation of East Sheridan Avenue is a priority this year in advance of the 2009

construction of the planned Sunset School nearby.

Mayor Roger Sedam said that, without planned improvements, "the increased traffic expected at 29th Street and Sheridan has the potential for that area being a (traffic) bottleneck."

A citywide project to improve storm sewers is likely to cost \$18 million, but that is only in the exploratory stage, Whiteman said.

With no viable funding source, the next step will be to survey the public to determine the level of interest, he said.

The city is expected to complete an engineering study this year for the separate Riverview Road sewer expansion project. Limited capacity has hampered development along the West Strip.

If state funding is available for the \$1.4 million project, construction could begin in 2009.

Water and sewer improvements also are planned for the North Cody Light Industrial Park project along Road 2AB.

The state has approved \$3 million in funding for the project, but the city would first have to annex land along Road 2AB, which includes a number of businesses and residences.

Sedam said he has heard from only one person opposing annexation.

Cody will also continue sprucing up highway entrances to the city, Sedam said.

Last year saw the completion of improvements to the city's east entrance, near Yellowstone Regional Airport. Either the Belfry Highway or Powell Highway entrance will be improved this year, he said.

Airport directors will decide this spring on a final design for a new midfield terminal, with plans calling for completion of the \$12.5 million project in 2011.

Preliminary infrastructure work for the new terminal, including a storm water runoff retention system, will be finished this year, said Bob Hooper, airport manager.

Private investors have announced plans to make \$3 million in improvements to the Sleeping Giant ski area near the East Entrance to Yellowstone Park.

Plans call for a new chairlift and T-bar, and expanding the vertical run from 600 feet to 1,000 feet, with a scheduled opening around Thanksgiving.

Two projects in the planning phase will see initial studies completed early this year.

Next month, Minnesota-based consultant Rod Markin will finish a \$31,000 feasibility and marketing study for a proposed Cody event center. Markin will present his findings in March to the City Council, Whiteman said.

Powell has received \$25,000 in SLIB funds to conduct a similar study for the proposed Centennial Park, to be located on 10 acres on the west side of town, between Road 10 and Division Street.

Planners have not made preliminary cost estimates for the Cody Event Center or Centennial Park.

### **By the numbers**

More than \$100 million in capital improvement projects are planned for the Bighorn Basin.

Project	Estimated Cost	Est. Completion	Funding source
Powell fiber network	\$6.5 million	August 2008	private

Greybull ethanol plant	\$45 million	Summer 2000	private
Powell pool	\$8.5 million	2009	both
Cody library	\$5.8 million	Fall 2008	both
East Sheridan rehab	\$2 million	2009	public
Cody storm sewer	\$18 million	unknown	unknown
Riverview Rd sewer	\$1.4 million	unknown	unknown
North Cody water & sewer	\$3 million	2009	public
New Cody airport terminal	\$12.5 million	2011	public
Sleeping Giant ski area	\$3 million	November	private

Contact Ruffin Prevost at [rprevost@billingsgazette.com](mailto:rprevost@billingsgazette.com) or 307-527-7250.