

Seneca Completes Water System Improvements



Two crew members of Charlie's Construction, Inc., Frankfort, KS work to install a 10-inch stop in a waterline at Seneca in April 2010. The stop will allow isolation of a section of line to help minimize disruption of service to customers. At right, Charlie Loiseau, owner, Utility Superintendent Brian Rusche, and Seneca Administrator Tami Danliker discuss the work.

Seneca, Kansas, located in Nemaha County in northeastern Kansas, has been in need of water system improvements since 2006. Patrons complained of stale or stagnant water in prior months and years. When city staff would flush the system to eliminate any stagnant water, the process would also “stir up” sediments in the pipelines. These sediments became a problem for RWD 2 that purchases water from the city. Patrons of the RWD would, on occasion, find a rust colored load of whites in the laundry!

A hydraulic computer model was created and analyzed by the engineering firm, Wilson & Company, Inc., Salina, KS that determined that the installation of some looped distribution piping would improve circulation, pressures and water quality. As a result of the study and recommendations provided by the firm, the city decided to pursue a project that would eliminate dead ends in the system and ultimately improve circulation and quality.

In July 2009, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment approved the design memorandum allowing Wilson & Company to submit plans and specifications to the agency. Those plans were approved by KDHE in August 2009 and the bids for construction and materials were awarded in January 2010. The project included the installation of 4,080 feet of 6-inch PVC waterline, 615 feet of 8-inch PVC waterline and 990 feet of 10-inch PVC waterline. Several horizontal directional bores under city streets, US Highway 36 and the railroad tracks were included. The highway bore included placement of 20-inch continuous steel encasement. Several valve installations in the new lines and two large valve stops in existing lines of the system were specified to allow repairs to be made without unnecessary interruption of service over a large area. Five new fire hydrants were also installed to provide better fire protection to the city.

Project costs were of great concern to city officials due to the recent

completion of a project that drilled new wells to provide needed water to the city and increased water rates to patrons. The base rate was increased in 2008 to cover the new estimated debt service but final costs for the project were less than projections. Thus, there is a difference between the debt service coverage and the actual base rate. This overage is available to pay the new debt service without requiring additional rate increases. City officials are very pleased with this, as the initial increase in 2008 was very sudden and substantial to patrons.

Estimates for the 2010 system improvements totaled \$509,813. City Administrator Tami Dandliker was pleased to announce that actual costs will be around \$309,000. Bids received were much lower than original engineer's estimated projections.

Additionally, the city qualified for available funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Funding was obtained through the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan

Seneca, 32 other applicants benefit from ARRA funding

While there is great consternation expressed by many Americans over "government spending", it seems that those who can obtain benefits of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act do so. The project at Seneca is one of them.

According to Dave Waldo at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment which administers the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund, readiness to move was imperative as the ARRA \$ had to be under contract within one year or by February 17, 2010.

"KDHE wrote eligible borrowers on January 27 2009 asking for projects which were ready to go. The agency received 107 submittals totaling an estimated \$144 million, far greater than the \$19.5 million ARRA funds that were being made available to the loan program. The Intended Use Plan (IUP) hearing was held March 23, 2009. KDHE tapped 33 projects, totaling \$53 million. We asked applicants to confirm their interest in 14 days. A completed loan application was required by June 30, design by July 30, and executed contract by November 30 or KDHE didn't guarantee the principal forgiveness. There was some slippage but all of the money was under contract by February 17, 2010."

The ARRA funding resulted in a principle forgiveness of approximately 33 percent to those borrowers who maintained eligibility.

Fund, which is administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). ARRA provided a 33 percent forgiveness on the principle of the loan. At the time of project approval, the write-off was anticipated to be about 20 percent. Due to some other projects not proceeding, the amount of principle forgiveness increased to the higher percentage. The original loan forgiveness was almost doubled, thus passing on more savings to those projects that were fortunate enough with their project timing to benefit.

Seneca's project was initiated by Administrator Dandliker. Working with Utility Superintendent Brian Rusche, they identified projects that needed to be completed or issues that needed to be addressed. For Tami, what seemed to take an eternity, only took three years before ground was broken when contractor Charlie Loiseau of Charlie's Construction, Inc., Frankfort, KS, started the first of many bores. After the completion of the project (slated for September 2010), one would

think that city personnel would be ready for a break. But that's not the case. They are trying to acquire a grant to rehabilitate the downtown area including the restoration of the storefronts, the removal and replacement of the brick Main Street and the installation of new water and wastewater lines. If Seneca is approved for funding and proceeds with the project, it will join the list of communities with "new" downtown historic districts like Wamego and Marysville.

Administrator Dandliker and city staff have done a good job identifying problem areas in the water distribution system, finding solutions to funding issues, using available funding resources to save the patrons money, and are in the process of installing new infrastructure to improve the quality of the water they use on a daily basis.

Pete Koenig is a GPS/GIS Tech at KRWA where he has been employed since 2004. He also currently serving on the board of directors for Nemaha RWD 2.



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