

Local

Calhoun receives \$1 million grant from DLG

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The city of Calhoun has received a \$1 million Community Development Block Grant from the Department of Local Government.

According to a press release from the DLG, the funds will aid in the city's design and construction of a new 400,000-gallon-per-day wastewater treatment plant. The current plant, constructed in 1973, was not designed to treat phosphorus in the water. Because of this, the utility has had to pay approximately \$15,000 each year to purchase chemicals needed to bring flows into the required limits, and permit violations have led to enforcement action.

Calhoun City Council member Bruce Cabbage says that the process was initiated by the previous mayor, who brought his concerns to the Green River Area Development District. Since then, GRADD has been instrumental in the process, he said.

"This grant is fantastic," said Cabbage. "I know that Joanna Shake (GRADD's associate director of Community and Economic Development) worked hard to get it for us. We really appreciate all that she and GRADD do for Calhoun and McLean County."

In addition to the CDBG funding, the city has also secured a \$1.9 million grant and a \$2 million loan through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development. The total project cost is expected to be roughly \$4.9 million, according to the press release.

While Cabbage was optimistic about the grant, he said that further funding would still have to be found and decided on by the council.

"The biggest thing is to see how it's going to impact the customers," said Cabbage. "When we spend that much money, if we have to borrow money, it's going to make the sewer rates go up. The council has to look very hard as far as what effect it will have on customers."

Cabbage said that the city is currently trying to get a handle some water leaks around the city before they will be able to devote their full attention to the wastewater project.

"We're hoping that we will have the water issues straightened out in the next five to six months so we can concentrate on it completely then," he said.

"This funding is critical to McClean County's ability to improve its wastewater infrastructure," said state Rep. Jim Gooch. "Construction of a new wastewater treatment plant will provide a strong boost to the City of Calhoun, and I would like to thank the Department for Local Government for their support for the needs of our rural communities."

The CDBG program, overseen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides assistance to communities for use in revitalizing neighborhoods, expanding affordable housing and economic opportunities, providing infrastructure and/or improving community facilities and services.