

Basalt busy with projects despite trimming budget

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April 26, 2010

BASALT – Bicyclists, pedestrians and history buffs will appreciate what the town of Basalt has got cooking this spring.

The town has launched numerous public works projects even though it has tightened its belt because of the recession. Several projects are being funded from a 1 percent sales tax dedicated to trails and open space endeavors. The revenues cannot be used for other uses, so there is no advantage in squirreling them away during the recession, officials say.

The town awarded a contract to Clark's Construction of Grand Junction for \$669,000 for trails projects along and near Willits Lane, according to Town Manager Bill Kane. Phase two of the Willits Trail project started this month, featuring completion of the "boat ramp" stretch from Hooks Bridge to Sunset Drive. The trail, on the Roaring Fork River side of Willits Lane, will be separated from the road by a raised median, Kane said.

The town also tore up the old asphalt trail below the west Basalt Bypass Bridge and is replacing it with concrete, according to Kane. The old trail was buckling and breaking up, making it treacherous for road bikers and kids. The trail beneath the Highway 82 bridge is an important link from both Two Rivers Road and the Emma Trail to the Willits Trail. The town has a license for the trail from the Colorado Department of Transportation, which owns the right-of-way.

A third trail project will feature the extension of an existing trail behind the Orchard Plaza complex, where City Market is located, and Movieland. The extended trail will provide a link to the Eagle County Community Building and the trail network at Crown Mountain Park.

The trail work is important, Kane said, because it will allow a rider to connect east and west Basalt without using roads. The trail sections also provide great access to lower-traffic roads, such as Two River Road and old Highway 82 between El Jebel and Catherine Store.

The trail work is scheduled to be completed by July.

Following are other projects already under way or ready to crank up in Basalt:

- A small trail will be constructed between the library and the vicinity of the roundabout near the Basalt Store.
- Two Rivers Road will receive a bike-lane stripe from Cottonwood Lane, near the 7-Eleven, east to where the Basalt-Old Snowmass Trail begins.
- A contract for \$301,000 was awarded to Building Restoration Specialties Inc. of Denver for stabilization and preservation of the Fryingpan Kilns at Arbaney Park. Five kilns are in need of extensive work. Two are in relatively good shape. The project has a total cost of \$341,447. The majority of the cost will be covered by a grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund, with 25 percent coming from the town and community groups. Work will begin around June 1.

- The Wily Community Arts Center and the town are remodeling spaces in the old library. The arts center was awarded a lease by the town, which owns the structure. It plans to relocate by May 1. The town is moving its planning department from Town Hall to space in the old library that is divided from the arts center.
- The town is seeking a grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation to explore a pedestrian overpass or underpass of Highway 82 to connect old town Basalt with Southside. The study will look at both Midland Avenue and Basalt Avenue for possible connections, Kane said.
- The town continues to explore the possibility of developing a micro-hydro system that takes advantage of the municipal water supply coming from the Lucksinger Springs and Basalt Springs on Basalt Mountain. The town is seeking a grant from the Governor's Energy Office in Colorado and exploring funding options with Holy Cross Energy.
- The Basalt Regional Heritage Society will start restoration of the Arbaney Barn adjacent to Arbaney Park in June. The organization is trying to raise the last of the funds for the \$126,400 project. Once completed, the barn will be used for heritage society presentations and living history demonstrations of activities like life on a ranch.

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