

Streetscape project looks to be a go

By Bob Niedbala

Staff writer

niedbala@observer-reporter.com

WAYNESBURG - The long-awaited streetscape project for downtown Waynesburg could be under way before the end of the year.

Waynesburg Borough manager Bruce Wermlinger told council Monday that recent problems involving the relocation of utility lines which had threatened to further delay the project have for the most part been resolved.

Problems were partly resolved when two of the three utility companies whose lines will have to be buried in the project area on High and Washington streets agreed to cover line relocation costs not paid by the grant, he said.

Both Allegheny Power and Comcast agreed to pay the costs of burying their lines not covered by grant funding, Wermlinger said.

The borough is now negotiating with the third utility, Windstream, which first told the borough it would cost \$79,000 to relocate its lines, but has since lowered the estimate to \$52,000.

The borough can't afford to pay the additional costs, Wermlinger said. If Windstream doesn't reduce the amount further, the borough will have to seek money from an outside source to cover the costs, he said.

The only alternative, Wermlinger said, is for Windstream's lines to remain above ground on utility poles.

The streetscape project has been in the works for at least four years and is being funded with \$1.6 million in federal grant money.

Only in May did borough officials learn federal grant money could not be used to eliminate overhead utility lines. It was estimated then that about \$500,000 would be needed to relocate the lines.

Wermlinger also reported the project's final engineering design was completed and submitted to the state Department of Transportation.

PENNDOT was scheduled to advertise the project for bid last Wednesday. However, the borough was told the advertising was delayed but still should be completed soon.

"I don't foresee any other problems with streetscape at this point, other than the issue of the \$52,000," Wermlinger said. "It's realistic that possibly in September or October we're going to start seeing them tearing up some things on Washington Street," he said.

Council could not hold an official meeting Monday because of the lack of a quorum. In attendance were Charles Berryhill, Judy Howard, Eric Rush and Carol English.

Wermlinger also reported Sam McCollum, who was appointed to council last month to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Pete Walker, has resigned.

McCollum resigned to accept an appointment to the Central Greene School Board. The borough will accept letters from residents of Ward III interested in the seat. Those who submitted letters earlier are asked to do so again.

Copyright Observer Publishing Co.