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'There's just too much water'

South Torrington infrastructure project on hiatus

By John Miller

Staff writer

The \$6 million water and sewer renovation project in South Torrington is on indefinite hold due to the excessive ground water present from the heavier than usual rains this year.

The project's contractor, Hedquist Construction of Casper, submitted a request to terminate the project until further notice with the project developer, WLC Engineering. The contractor's

crews have already vacated the area, leaving behind a few 20-foot sections of sewer line and a slew of dirt roads where there used to be asphalt.

According to project manager Shane Porter of WLC, the crews have been fighting groundwater from day one, pumping trenches out as they lay pipe. However, with the Platte River as high as anyone can

See WATER, A7

Water: There's just too much

From page A1

remember, the situation has gotten completely untenable.

"The river is the highest it has been in 20 years," South Torrington Water and Sewer District Representative Sylvia Anaya said. "Our data analysis tells us that groundwater won't be low enough to resume work until mid-September."

According to Anaya, 85 percent of the water lines have been completed, although none of them are yet functioning. The big problem is the sewer lines, of which none have yet been installed.

"Protocol for sewer

lines is 28 feet below the surface," Anaya said. "The work crews were hitting groundwater at three feet. There's just too much water. It's impossible to continue."

In the meantime, the Goshen County Commissioner's office has their own litany of objections to the work stoppage, not the least of which is who is in charge of the area with no contractor on site.

"Every street has been milled up, and all of them have water and fire valves attached," county engineer Bob Taylor said while speaking at the commissioner's meeting Tuesday. "The problem is they're just

stubs sticking out of the ground or buried in the mud and we can't tell which is which. Gary needs to stay out of there (Gary Korell, the county road and bridge supervisor). If we were to break anything, we could be held liable for damages."

Anaya agreed, citing an agreement made with Hedquist by the South Torrington Board of Directors.

"Our agreement states that they leave the area in an acceptable condition," Anaya said. "We have to consider safety issues. We want everything, tools, supplies, equipment, stored away, and the stubs have to be dealt with somehow.

They are also responsible for leaving our streets in whatever condition the owners (S. Torrington Board of Directors) deem acceptable."

Anaya said she is waiting to hear from Hedquist owner Craig Hedquist to set up a meeting with the board to iron out these issues and discuss a new timetable for the project, which has a substantial completion date of Oct. 31. As of yet, no meeting has been scheduled and no new timetable has been announced.

"He's a busy guy, he has a lot of projects scheduled," Anaya said.

Hedquist was not available for comment.



Photo/ John Miller

Groundwater from the North Platte River submerges part of the Educational Botanical Garden in South Torrington.