

February 10, 2022

Two questions that pop up regularly in conversations with neighbors are, 1. When will Carlton get glass and yard debris recycling service, and 2. Why are we not repairing our city streets?

Both of these issues are on the city's radar, so here's an update:

RECYCLING: Glass and yard debris curbside pickup has been on the council agenda for several years. Initially, we needed to get the franchise agreement with Recology updated. That was finally completed in late 2020; which meant we could start the discussion for adding curbside glass and yard debris pickup in late 2021, with the goal of starting it in 2022.

That was the plan...until the Riverbend landfill was closed. This was a problem for Recology because that is where they off-loaded Carlton trash. Until they determined how the closure would affect their operations, they weren't in a position to add more services. Up to now, as far as we know, that trash destination question has not been answered, and so Recology is not now comfortable adding more pickup services.

We're staying in touch with Recology, and continue to monitor the Riverbend landfill situation so that when Recology is ready, we can resume discussion about glass and yard debris recycling.

STREETS: Nobody is ignoring the need for repairs and resurfacing on city streets and sidewalks. While it seems to those of us who use them daily that it shouldn't be hard to make the repairs, turns out it's not as simple as deciding to fix a section of street or sidewalk and then doing it. Planning and coordination is involved, not to mention finding the funding; because as any homeowner knows, infrastructure repairs don't come cheap.

There's another factor. North Yamhill Street, approximately from the Fire Station to Main Street, then south on Pine Street to the city limits is under the jurisdiction of the Oregon Department of Transportation. The City of Carlton has no authority to make any changes or repairs on these streets.

Yamhill County is part of ODOT's District 2 which also serves Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Polk, Marion, Lincoln, Benton, Linn, Lane, and parts of western Washington and western Clackamas counties. The district is responsible for about 1,260 street miles; of those, 160 miles are in Yamhill

County, and about a half-mile of that is in Carlton. The district has a lot of demand, and small sections in cities such as ours don't always make the top of the priority list.

For the rest of our city streets, prioritizing repairs makes for some difficult decisions. Public Works can start the year with a priority list of streets and sidewalks needing attention, and a work schedule, but the streets, and sewer and water service lines (which mostly are located under the streets) don't always cooperate. Often, instead of getting the project done that was scheduled, our guys find themselves digging out collapsed or leaking service lines on the opposite side of town from where they'd planned to be working that day. Which means planned projects are going to get put off to another day.

And because they're public facilities, when it comes to large street repairs or replacements (such as resurfacing several blocks), the city is bound by federal and state requirements as well as our own building codes. Work is needed to coordinate street closures; evaluate conditions of any infrastructure under the street, and decide whether to replace those at the same time. Scheduling the contractors is the same complex process as for a major home repairs, but with added safety and contract protections. It all takes time. And it's not cheap, which is another hit on the funds budgeted for street maintenance and repair which often means other, less critical projects are moved back.

We look for ways to reduce costs while expediting projects. Here are two examples of how our council and staff are working to fund projects without depleting the streets funding:

This year, we're looking to use a public/private partnership program that provides high school students and graduates who are interested in learning a building trade, real-world training on the Carlton Workforce Sidewalk Project. In addition to providing property owners with the opportunity to repair or replace their sidewalks at a lower cost, with labor, supervision and materials coordinated through SEDCOR (Strategic Economic Development Corporation) and the Willamette Workforce Partnership, this sidewalk project will be supervised by construction professionals, the tools and materials will be provided through donations to SEDCOR and WWP. When the project is done, participants will leave the project with the training, tools, contacts, and experience to earn a living, and they leave behind a very grateful city, and some new, professionally constructed sidewalks.

Another example is the repair of West Main Street, from Yamhill Street to the city limit at the bridge. Not only does the street surface need to be replaced, the sewer and water mains that run under that section of street need attention, and new sidewalks, curbs and gutters are needed.

It all needs to be coordinated, because there's no sense to just redo the surface, then the next year dig it all up to do the utility service lines. And once the service line replacements are in process, we have no choice but to replace the surface.

The cost estimate for this project is \$2+million. We currently have one grant for \$100,000 toward that total.

Now, if we're lucky we'll be able to find outside funding sources to get this done; but the funding will have to come from a number of different pots. Our City Council and staff watch for state, federal and private grants and other income opportunities to help pay for projects like this.

This is why the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is such a big deal...our city alone has received approximately \$6.7 million in total from three separate grants awarded through the state legislature, the county commission, and in a direct grant from ARPA funds. We've also received pre-payment of service development charges (SDCs) from the JR Meadows developers. ALL of that money is going into more required and needed sewer system upgrades that benefit all of us.

But please keep in mind that within Carlton we have several miles of sewer and water lines that are close to 100 years old, and still in service. These service lines should have been replaced long ago (they leak – a lot!), but the city didn't have the money to do it unless service fees were increased – and nobody wanted to do that – until there was no other choice.

Now, even with these generous grants, as you wonder what those sewer rate increases have been for: They will make up the difference between the cost of sewer and wastewater system upgrades and the grants. Staff and Council are always on the prowl for more grant opportunities and other funding sources to reduce the burden on all of us, but we can't continue to just sit by and hope the money will drop in our laps.

That's what got us into this situation in the first place.