

CULLMAN

City eyes massive sewer project

Up-to \$117,000 approved for engineering services

By Trent Moore
STAFF WRITER

With many of the pipes connecting Cullman's sewer dating back to the 1930s and 1940s, city officials hope to tackle a large scale renovation within the next two years along Eight Mile Creek.

To map out exactly what will be needed the city has approved a contract to pay St. John & Associates up-to \$117,000 for engineering and professional services related to the project, which has been classified as the north interceptor sewer study.

Considering the age of the system, officials say they know there are some problem areas within that

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pipeline. But at the moment, they don't know exactly where the pipe — which runs along the waterway near U.S. Highway 278 — is starting to break down.

"We're looking at some major repairs along Eight Mile Creek," Mayor Max Townson said. "[Water department supervisor] Chris Freeman has been authorized to purchase flow meters, inspection cameras and pumps. His department will be working with engineers to run cameras through old and outdated trunk lines."

Officials have noticed issues with infiltration, with rain water seeping into the flow, which puts an added burden on the treatment plant to process the additional water.

"It all still has to be treated, so it's hurting our capacity," Townson said.

Townson said the city will likely spend the next six months studying the system to determine the most feasible approach for repairs.

"We're just researching now and getting all the intel we need to make the right decisions," he said.

If the repairs were to wait any longer, Townson said he worries the city could eventually find itself outside of compliance with state and federal health regulations.

"It's so important, because we don't want to get into trouble for pollution," he said. "We need to make sure everything is operating as efficiently as possible."

With the study in its infancy, officials were hesitant to estimate exactly what the rehab project could cost in the long-run. But, Townson said it could be in the millions. The council plans to pass the 2013 budget later this month, so only the engineering fees will be included this year.

The full cost of the project will likely take effect in the 2014 budget.

This is not the first time the city has made an effort to upgrade old sewer lines, as the long-running streetscape project in downtown has also made a point to update lines during the paving and beautification process.

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