City Administrators Report

April 7, 2014

Boil Order/Health Advisory

As you know, the City had to go to a Boil Order on Wednesday, March 12, 2014. The large amount of rain we received the day before coupled with the ground being frozen caused all the water to flush into the creek. The turbidity spiked to the height that required the City to call for a Boil Order. The spike only lasted about 12 hours before the operators were able to get the numbers back down to below the Boil Order limits and into a Health Advisory.

By late Friday, the operators brought the plant back into compliance with our permit. After meeting with Greg Butts from Montana DEQ, we felt it necessary to leave the Health Advisory in place for a week or so to see what the weather was going to bring us. We did not want to keep lifting the Advisory and then have to reissue it later on.

On Tuesday April 1, 2014 the Health Advisory was lifted. The plant was well within the normal range for our permit for a period of two weeks prior to lifting the advisory, but again, with the rain events that were expected, we sided on being cautious and kept it in place for a while. Our hope is now with normal runoff, things will be going smoothly with no problems.

Sewer Main Replacement

On March 25, 2014, Thompson Construction started the replacement of a section of sewer main on Louisiana between 4th and 5th Streets. This section of line has been a problem in the past and was causing residents on this block to have slow drains and backups. Last fall, a camera was run up the main, finding that the main had low spots and areas that were causing material to hang-up, and creating problems to the home owners’ systems.

Since there are only two residents hooked up to the main, rather than replacing the whole main between 4th and 5th streets, we decided to replace part of the main and change the direction it would flow. The other residents on this block are serviced through the alleys.

Water main Abandonments

Lately, we have been hit with another rash of water leaks. Some have been service lines, and others are in the mains. In the business district on Mineral, we had several leaks in the alley from 4th street to 1st. The mains are all two inches in diameter and run from California to Louisiana. Some are shorter runs but this is the general area.

The sections between Mineral and Montana and 2nd and 3rd streets were slated to be replaced during the distribution upgrades. After finding out that the major leak in this section was a broken service line to a vacant lot, we decided to shut the service off at the main, and use the money for this section on a more problematic area.

Three weeks ago we had another leak in the section. When we shut down the main, we call the businesses and residents that were going to be affected. It turns out there are only 5 hookups on this 3-block section of main. After looking into these hookups more, Corky and I decided it would be better to put in new service lines from larger mains that exist in the streets to the curb stops, than to replace the main in the alley.

This would save a lot of money and would not require any engineering or DEQ review. We would abandon the 3-block section of main and disconnect it from the larger mains at each end in the alleys. There are several of the small mains that have few services that could be abandoned. We are looking into more of this type of alternative to replacing mains. We have to ensure that all the existing and future hookups can access another larger main nearby.

Departments

The crews at the waste water treatment plant are getting their credits for their operators’ licenses. Getting them all in classes and keeping the plant operating has been a challenge. One operator was in Missoula; when he returned the two other operators had scheduled their classes in Kalispell. Robert Salter from the water treatment plant and Lucas Backen from the waste water plant have taken their exams for their operators’ licenses.

The street department sent two dump trucks to Missoula again for more UPM winter mix from Knife River. They were down there in February to pick up a couple of loads that we thought would get us through the winter, but it did not last. The breakup this year has been especially bad. We are looking into getting “cold mix” made up this year for patching material. We have not been able to find any for years, but may be able to work out a deal with the County using their pug mill. They have made this material in the past and have had good success with it.

Jim Hammons