City Administrators Report

December 3, 2012

Street Lights

Flathead Electric Coop has done a survey of all the street lights in and around the city of Libby. They have been listed on a spread sheet and can be located by either a physical address or by a GIS number. Also they have listed the size of the bulb that each light fixture uses.

FEC has a new ServLoc number that is used in their billing system along with the GIS number to keep track of all the lights. The poles that have street lights attached to them, received yellow tags with numbers on them. The numbers on the yellow tags correlates with Township/Range/Section/FEC Grid/and Misc.

A yellow tag with the number 3031047201 would be Township 30, Range 31, Section 04, FEC Grid 72 and 01 being the first one in the FEC grid. This will also be helpful in determining who the lights belong to whether city, county or private.

At this point FEC was able to determine that there are 376 lights that were identified as being within the city limits of Libby. With the new billing that will be coming, there are a lot of lights that have a ServLoc number but no addresses. So either these lights do not exist or the city is paying for lights at businesses or private homes that are outside the city limits.

Once we can compile this list we can then go out and physically find these lights and determine;

1. If they exist, and
2. If they belong to the city.

I hope to have this information put together soon to find out if we are paying for lighting that is not the city’s responsibility.

Water Treatment Plant

As you are aware, we have been having a continuing problem with the turbidity at the water treatment plant. The issue of turbidity in the water has always been there but treating it has become the problem. Since June of this year, we have been experiencing problems dealing with this issue. Back washing of the filters, chemical changes, and every other attempt that the operators make does not seem to make a real deference in the treatment of the water. We have been staying within our permit guide lines but we have had some very close calls with the readings at the plant, which would mean the possibility of going to a boil order.

On Monday, November 19, Jeff Cicon and Paul Burnham from M&M exercised (opened) a 12 inch valve at the dam. This valve had not been opened in over 20 years to the best that anyone could remember. Once the valve was fully opened, there was a large amount of sediment released into the creek. The water cleared after a period of time. The valves were left open for over two hours. The reservoir dropped 2 inches in that time. While the evaluation of opening the valve to be able to drain the reservoir turned out to be successful, the amount of sediment released was a serious issue.

Late Tuesday night, the sediment started to arrive at the WTP. Chris Swensen called me and said he was afraid we may have to go to a “boil order”. I called John Weikel from Montana Rural Water and filled him in on our situation. He contacted Jeff and worked through some different chemical changes to treat the water. This seemed to help stabilize the climbing reading in the turbidity but only for awhile.

By late Wednesday, the increase in rain drove the levels up even higher to the point that the State DEQ contacted me to have the city go to a “Health Advisory”. (See Attached) Chris, John and I were in constant contact through the Thanksgiving weekend, monitoring the situation at the plant. On Monday, November 26, John contacted me with the name of a gentleman in Colorado that he felt was our best hope of finding someone knowledgeable enough in surface water treatment to help us.

I contacted Bob Thompson who lives outside of Denver, Colorado. Bob travels all over the western US dealing with water treatment plants. After talking with Bob and the operators from the plant, he suggested ordering a chemical called Cationic Polymer EC473. This is a chemical that the plant used years ago, but was changed to a different, cheaper type to save money. The EC473 is a chemical that can be used year round, where the other types are changed out depending on the season and the turbidity in the water.

Chemicals have been ordered and once we receive them, I will contact Bob to set up a time for him to do “jar tests” at the plant. Bob will work with the operator over the phone during this process. Hopefully, this issue will soon be figured out and put behind us. With all the construction planned for the dam in the future, the amount of disturbance to the creek and surrounding area is only going to increase. This is why it is so critical to get the plant operating at its optimal level now so we can avoid these problems in the future.

Departments

With exception of the WTP, things are running smoothly throughout the rest of the city. Street crews traveled to Missoula to pick up 4 dump truck loads of UPM, the winter pothole patching material. They have placed all the wreaths on Mineral and California Ave. and helped set and place lights on the community Christmas tree.

With winter not officially here until the 21 of December and no snow yet, they have been spending time getting the street shop cleaned up and organized. With all the projects and machinery being worked on, they never had much time to get this accomplished until now.

Waste water is plugging along well. The new drives and motors have been installed at the plant in the digester blower room. This is the small building next to the digester where the new sludge pump is located. If you have ever been in there you know how loud the motors are that are operating the blowers. With the new drives and motors we can control the speed of the motors and they are much quieter than the old ones. Part of the DEQ energy grant that we received was to upgrade these motors and drives.

The crew also has been spending a lot of time with the early warning system at the dam. After John Humphreys was here earlier this month we thought we had the power issue solved. It was not, as we do not get enough sunlight during the winter months to keep the battery system charged.

After some brain storming with the Mayor, Vic White and Corky Pape, a plan was put together to try a different type of battery that would hold a charge longer and would charge easier with the solar panel. The crew finished wiring the system in with a battery charger, and once the new batteries arrive they will put them in place. With this new set up the crew will be able to charge the batteries with a generator from the parking area at the dam. We hope the new batteries will last longer and not need charged so often during the winter months.

Jim Hammons