North Liberty Wants to Build New Water Plant

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa (AP) — North Liberty wants to build a new water plant and expand its wastewater system ahead of schedule in an effort to meet the demands of its rapidly growing population.

Officials said municipality utilities for the city of 15,500 residents will reach capacity five years sooner than previously projected, the Iowa City Press-Citizen [1] reported. Officials anticipate a population of about 18,000 in the next two to three years, at which current water and wastewater capacity will begin to be exceeded.

"We're growing quicker than projected," said North Liberty administrator Ryan Heiar.

The city is working with the Ames-based firm Fox Engineering, which has initially proposed a $27.2 million, two-phase water plant project with a capacity to serve 36,500 people. It has also proposed updating the city's wastewater plant in two phases at a cost of about $14.3 million.

"We're not in a position that we have to have capacity right now, we're handling the loads fine, but in order to continue to handle those loads, we need to start planning, design and, eventually, construction of the facilities," Heiar said.

North Liberty Water Superintendent Greg Metternich said the current water plan can increase its outflow, but it's limited by its softener system, which helps remove certain minerals from the water. The wastewater plant has similar limitations, and is designed for a certain population number.

It could take months before an official design is chosen for both projects. Construction could take up to two more years. Officials said the water plant could be operational by as early as 2017.

City officials said the projects will be paid for with revenue bonding options and increased water and sewer rates. The interest and principle in the bonds would be paid back by each utility. The rate jumps could range and will likely occur over several years.

"It will be gradual, over the course of time, and it will depend on, again, the number of users that we have and the revenue we're generating," Heiar said.

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