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YORK - Two utilities and paving projects in York Beach and Cape Neddick are significant not only because they involve major infrastructure upgrades, but also because they mark the beginning of a new cooperative relationship between the town and the water and sewer districts. And the winner is York residents.

More than \$1 million in combined work will begin next week on projects on Church Street and Shore Road, as both sewer and water districts lay lines and the town repaves the roads and replaces and adds sidewalks. The work will continue throughout April and May, and will involve rerouting daytime traffic.

Superintendents Don Neumann of the York Water District and Tim Haskell of the York Sewer District, and town Public Works Commissioner Dean Lessard have been working together in what Neumann called a “groundbreaking” collaboration. Individually, the projects would have cost residents and district customers more money, said the three.

“The taxpayers are also our ratepayers, so we need to work to maximize their money,” said Haskell.

“It’s not always easy. If you think about the three entities, our infrastructure is different, they’re aging at different times,” said Lessard. “The key is going to be building in flexibility so I can react when they’re doing a project and they can react when I do.”

Work on both projects is expected to begin the week of March 30, with temporary water lines being installed starting next week. They’re expected to conclude by Memorial Day weekend.

Church Street

The Church Street project is significant for both utilities, as it involves replacing existing lines with bigger mains at a cost of \$255,000 for the water district and \$200,000 for the sewer district. While repaving the road was not at the top of the town’s list, it was going to be due for work in the near future. Because the utilities were working together, Lessard said the town decided to take advantage of the opportunity.

The Water District is replacing an old 6-inch pipe with 12-inch pipe, more in keeping with the 12- to 16-inch pipes in the area. The new lines will increase water quality and fire protection to the road that, as the name implies, is the location of two churches, a small condominium complex and residential homes.

Most of the sewer lines will be replaced traditionally. However, a pipe that goes from the Railroad Avenue/Ridge Road/Church Street intersection under the ball field will be lined with fiberglass that is installed through a manhole cover. This will negate the need to dig up the ball field.

The town will be putting in a gravel sub base and then paving the road. The districts and town are sharing the \$54,000 cost. The town is also replacing the sidewalk.

Daytime traffic will be rerouted down Beacon Street from Ridge Road heading north, and down Railroad Avenue and out Ridge Road from Main Street. The road will be open at night.

Shore Road

This project was driven by the town, which wanted to put in a sidewalk to connect Short Sands and Cape Neddick beaches, and involves the section of Shore Road from the Shore Road Market to the Cape Neddick Bridge.

“This has been the town’s goal, so you could walk to the (Cape Neddick) Bridge, walk to the market for a sub, and walk to Short Sands,” said Lessard.

“We heard Dean was going to be putting a sidewalk in, and Shore Road has been on our radar for a long time,” said Neumann. Haskell said although that area is not sewered yet, the sewer district has decided to install a main while the road was already going to be open. There has long been concern about failing septic systems along the Cape Neddick River, and Haskell said the district is preparing for the day when the sewer lines can be installed in that area of town.

There will be blasting of ledge involved in this project. Neumann said this operation has become refined in recent years, so that disruption and noise is at a minimum. All homeowners have been notified, and surveys of all structures are being conducted pre- and post-blasting.

As on Church Street, the road will be closed to traffic during the day, but will be open at night. The cost of the project is \$240,000 for sewer and \$325,000 for water, which includes another three-way share of roughly \$60,000 for roadwork.

These two projects, said the three men, are just the first of what they hope will be continued cooperation in the months and years to come. The districts hope to meet annually with new boards of selectmen and planning to discuss future projects that might overlap with town goals.

“It’s really about planning and being on the same page,” said Neumann. “We have to have everyone rowing in the right direction, where we can shift and adjust our projects so we can work together.”

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