

Electrical distribution project upgrades for Falls City
(KLZA)-- The long awaited and longtime needed upgrades to the Falls City electrical distribution system will begin soon.

Preparations for the project have been ongoing for a couple of years.

The initial phase will include converting about 14 blocks of the downtown business alley overhead power lines to an underground system which will make the system more resilient to weather events and safer for the public.

Falls City Utility Superintendent Trevor Campbell said during an open house meeting Tuesday providing updates on the project that work will be getting underway Monday, April 1, with Watts Electric Company doing the construction.

Phase I of the project will be from Chase Street to Harlan Street and from 12th Street north to 20th Street, affecting businesses and a few residential properties.

The age and condition of the existing system is nearing the end of its useful life and no longer provides reliable electrical service to the community. If there were to be a loss of the current 5 kV switch structure, it would result in about 65 - 70 percent of the system being without power, affecting approximately 1,500 electrical meters.

A new 15 kV Power Distribution Center will be built as part of the project.

Currently the estimated price tag for the project is \$5.9 million and will be paid for through city bonds and cash reserves. Just over \$5.1 million of the estimated cost will be funded through two different bonds. A combined Utility Revenue Bond and a Municipal Improvement Bond.

Campbell said that during the downtown phase of the project, local businesses will at times be affected by power outages. Watts Electric will contact businesses to allow them to make necessary arrangements for the periods of time the power will be out.

One issue that could affect the time it takes to complete the project is the delivery of some transformers required for the project. Currently those transformers are scheduled to arrive this fall, but could be delayed. Campbell is hopeful that based on the latest estimates for delivery of the transformers, the downtown portion of the electrical distribution updates could be completed by the spring of 2025.

Tuesday's open house meeting was held at the Southeast Nebraska Community

College Learning Center in Falls City.

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