

Public Works Software Should Yield Savings

Written by Donna Baxter For the News-Leader

Jun. 18, 2013

OZARK—The Ozark Department of Public Works has a new program that will save the department and taxpayers a lot of money.

GIS (geographical information system) Specialist John McCart explained that new asset management software called Beehive and ArcView enables public works employees to maintain data on “points” around the city which could include fire hydrants, manholes and other infrastructure.

With all the information about each location in the system, a worker can see immediately everything he/she will need to fix a problem, which can save time on the job site.

“I think that in the first year, this program will definitely pay for itself and even more to come,” McCart said.

“Where ArcView ends, Beehive picks up. You can add more to it and make it even more of an asset management tool that’s easier to navigate and for the guys in the field to operate.”

He noted that different modules can be added. The city has purchased three: water, wastewater and a work engine. The system shows buildings, phone lines, contours and hydrant buffers. By clicking on a specific point, other information about it can be displayed.

For example, in the event of a fire hydrant leak, a public works employee will input the hydrant’s ID number, which will pull up the hydrant on the map. Click on the hydrant and other pertinent information will come up such as the size pipe running into it, manufacturer and number of nozzles.

“All the information about the event will be entered, and photos connected with the page can also be attached,” McCart said.

Tony Burkhart, wastewater treatment supervisor, said the program will really be a help to employees.

“It is a big investment but it was money well spent,” said Burkhart.

Like when the EPA came for an inspection in January, he explained. Employees knew what they had done but had only work orders on paper to connect when and what each department had done.

“This will basically slam everything into one place — a one-stop shop for the entire city public works department,” Burkhart said. “It’ll streamline things so we won’t have to have six filing cabinets. It will be pretty impressive once it gets all lined out.”

Burkhart said the newer of the two sewage treatment plants, Elk Valley, designed to handle one million gallons of effluent per day, was built in 2009 on McLean Road just west of U.S. Highway 65. It is presently processing 150,000 gallons of wastewater every day so it can take on plenty of capacity.

The North Plant on 22nd Street was built in 1983 and has been

added onto several times. It now handles 1.3 million gallons of effluent per day which is about half its 2.1 million gallon capacity.

Burkhart explained that when the new plant was designed in 2008 the city’s population growth was strong. Growth slumped after the plant was built, but signs of steady population growth are returning.

“We’re where we’ve never been in the past, we’ve got room,” he said, adding that when Elk Valley went online it reduced the number of sewage pump stations from 40 to about 30.

“Now you can look on the computer and get a trend of what’s happening at those stations and will know where a problem probably started. You can control or close valves from the central computer.”

Burkhart said the new program doesn’t replace a set of eyes but if an alarm should go off, he can get on his laptop and see immediately what’s happening at the treatment plant.

“Used to we’d have to drive there to see why the alarm was going off,” Burkhart said.

McCart said that much of the Ozark Department of Public Works’ effort involves underground utilities that are visible on ArcView, like the new electric lines at Finley River Park.

“All vendors at park events will now have plenty of electricity,” he said. “We added an 800 amp CT Panel for Christmas lights and a row of outlet pedestals in time for the duck races.”

Plans are to also upgrade electrical circuits in the barn. Another CT panel will be on the park perimeter. McCart said, “There are some guys who can tell you everything about every structure in the whole city; they’ve got a memory like a steel trap.”

When they retire, who will carry on? This program will help to fix that, he said.

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