

OUR TOWNS Cedar County

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HARTINGTON

Funds To Help Boost Energy Efficiency Of City Buildings

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HARTINGTON, Neb. — Thanks to a new grant, the City of Hartington will be able to complete two projects that should improve energy efficiency for two city buildings.

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant — part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 — comes from the Nebraska Energy Office, and will go toward the replacement of all the windows in the city auditorium, and the windows, lighting fixtures and entrance of City Hall.

It's an 80-20 grant, which means the state will provide 80 percent of the total funds, leaving the city to pay for 20 percent.

In all, the state will provide a combined total of \$65,655.20, requiring the city to provide \$16,413.80.

"We really feel honored to be able to get a grant like this. It's very much appreciated," said Hartington Mayor Bill Yates.

"With the small towns struggling as they are, I think they need to take every opportunity to go after funds when they can," added Economic Development Coordinator Carla Becker.

Both projects have been some time in coming. The City Hall was built in the 1950s and features almost an entire wall lined with floor-to-ceiling length windows, and a front entrance that isn't handicapped-accessible. Inside, lighting is spotty, with dozens of fluorescent lights flickering on and off, or not lighting up at all.

"Nothing has been changed on this building since they built it," Yates said. "Back then, they weren't really thinking in terms of energy efficiency."

The city auditorium presents its own challenges.

"It's pretty unique because it was built in 1922, and it's on the Nebraska Historical Register," Becker said.

All the windows are still original "so we have to be careful with what kind of windows we put in there. They've needed to be replaced for quite a while."

"It's probably been about 20 years," Yates said. "We always run into problems with the fact that we have to keep it historical. If we didn't have to do that, we could just go in and put in some nice new, modern windows, but it would end up taking away from the historical aspect of the auditorium, and we wouldn't want to do that."

He said the completed projects should save taxpayers money in terms of the heating and cooling bills the buildings accrue.

"I'm not sure what the exact energy savings were, but we're hoping that it will be substantial," Yates said. "We really will not know until it's done. Our bills keep going up... We're sure hoping that it will be worth the effort that we're going through to get this done."

Bids will be taken in the fall, with construction to commence some time in the first or second quarter of next year, Becker said.

Yates said he's glad the projects will finally be getting off the ground.

"I think it's great for the city, and especially for the taxpayers of the city, because this is a tremendous help in their part," he said. "We shouldn't have to raise taxes to come up with the \$82,000 to put the new windows in. The \$16,000 is manageable. We can do that in our budget. I just think it's a win-win situation for the city itself and the people."

The projects would simply not have been possible without the grant, Yates said, "not with this past winter, where we spent over \$65,000 in snow removal. Of course, that, too, was not in the budget."

Becker said getting the grants "was a team effort. It took a lot of people to get it done, because we turned it around in about a week. There were several people that went above and beyond over a weekend to get it done and submitted. It was that important that we submit it."

Yates placed most of the credit with Becker and City Clerk Crystal Lenzen.

"They're the ones who did most of the work on it," he said. "I just filled in on the last day and answered a couple of questions for them."

Hartington may have some more improvement



ABOVE: Hartington's Economic Development Coordinator Carla Becker, Mayor Bill Yates and City Clerk Crystal Lenzen stand in front of one of the city hall's large windows that will be replaced with the help of a grant from the Nebraska Energy Office. Lighting fixtures and the building's entrance will be replaced, as well. BELOW: The grant will also go toward the replacement of all the windows in the City Auditorium. Built in 1922, the windows of the building are all original.

projects on the horizon within the next two years, as well, when a downtown revitalization plan comes to pass.

"We've not replaced Broadway and Main Street. They were put in back in the WPA days (of the 1930s), so they're old," Yates said. "Past city councils have really worked hard and put an asphalt layer over it, which helped, but now we're just putting Band-Aids on it. It's just got to be replaced."

The same goes for the water system that runs down Broadway.

"That'll make this \$82,000 look like pocket change, unfortunately," Yates said.

He added that the work on all of these projects shows that residents are taking an active role in improving their community.

"I think Hartington really is on a progressive move to make our town bigger and better," he said.



COURTESY PHOTO

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