

Main Street 9-25-91 work begins next week

By Paulette Tobin
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The reconstruction on Rapid City's Main Street from East Boulevard to West Boulevard is set to begin next week at the Fifth Street and Mount Rushmore Road intersections, Main Street merchants were told Tuesday night.

Heavy Constructors of Rapid City, the company that was awarded the \$2 million contract to rebuild the street and install new underground utilities, plans to start working on those intersections between Oct. 3-7.

If weather and time allows, the contractor may also do some utility work this fall east of Fifth Street to Fourth Street, said Larry Kostaneski, manager of the city engineering division.

But under the terms of its contract, the company must be out of downtown for the Christmas shopping season, Nov. 25-Jan. 6.

Many of the merchants who attended a public meeting on Main Street reconstruction Tuesday night tried to get city officials to tell them exactly when the street in front of their businesses would be torn up.

Kostaneski said that was impossible.

The city has a construction schedule, but that schedule could be affected by weather, by the contractor or by merchants themselves if there is a compelling reason to change it.

However, Kostaneski assured the merchants the city and the contractor would work with them to make the construction as smooth as possible.

■ Public meetings will be held biweekly or as often as necessary to

keep merchants up to speed on what is happening and what is coming up.

■ The Rapid City Journal will publish updates on the project as needed to describe detours and other information to help merchants and the public.

■ Beginning next spring, a city employee will be assigned to the project full time and will be on site to answer questions about the project.

■ Temporary signs and traffic signals will be installed on Omaha Street to reroute traffic.

■ Work will be done a block at a time. The contractor must maintain temporary pedestrian walkways through areas under construction.

■ The contractor will not close two intersections in a row at any one time so that no block will be isolated from vehicular traffic. One intersection will remain open, and traffic will circulate on that block as if it were a cul-de-sac.

After the Christmas break, work will begin between Fifth Street and Mount Rushmore Road and should be complete by Memorial Day. The rest of the project is to be completed by Nov. 1.

Community Development Director Bonnie Hughes said she contacted Cedar Rapids, Iowa, which has an ongoing downtown street project, to see how businesses there had coped. She said merchants there used marketing to counteract some of the detriments of construction.

Rapid City businessman James Taylor said the city should hire a public relations firm for the Main Street project to minimize the loss of business because the project is so large and because it is an important retail area.