Excavation work delays Main Street Square project

By Barbara Soderlin
Journal staff

The city Public Works Committee approved a change order for the Main Street Square project on Tuesday, allowing an additional $58,000 in costs and a change in the completion date.

The extra costs came after crews had to do more excavation work than was expected, said Neal Schloßman, president of SECO Construction, the general contractor on the project. Only 4 feet of excavation below grade was anticipated, but crews found rubble and the remains of old foundations down 8 to 10 feet underground that had to be removed and replaced with an even fill to provide a solid foundation for the public plaza, he said.

The costs are covered by contingency funds built into the project’s $6.5 million budget. The city council will vote on the change order at its next meeting on Monday.

The extra work pushed the completion date for the bulk of the work on the project back about three weeks to Sept. 13. Schloßman said it would also push the expected final completion date back from Sept. 30. He said a new final completion date is expected to be requested as part of another change order the Public Works Committee will vote on at a future meeting. He declined to provide details of that change order, saying it hasn’t been drafted.

Workers were busy Tuesday at the site at Sixth and Main streets where a crane lowered geometric granite pieces into place on concrete foundations along the Sixth Street side.

The gray hunks of granite are the “Black Hills tapestry stones,” part of a decorative sculptural element that defines the western edge of the plaza. The “Badlands tapestry stones,” similar pieces in a tan color, will line the Main Street side of the park. The biggest of the stones weighs 14 tons, Schloßman said.

He said he expects to receive another truckload of the pieces each week for the next five weeks. The granite pieces, along with concrete planter bases, are in place and are the first hint at what the plaza will look like above ground. Most of the work to date has involved preparing the site and laying infrastructure.

Work over the next few weeks will include placing more pipes and conduit, as well as placing the foundation for the skating rink and fountain.

Starting today, the north lane of Main Street will be closed along the square to allow for construction of new curb and gutter. The lane should reopen by March 25 but may need to close on and off after that to allow for delivery and placement of the granite pieces.

One challenge of the project is working in conjunction with the contractor that is simultaneously remodeling the buildings immediately adjacent to the square to the east, Dean Kurtz Construction. The two companies are sharing staging space and have to communicate frequently about the timing of their work.

“We’ve had a lot of conversations about sequencing,” Schloßman said. “We’ve got a good team of people on both contracts. It’ll work. Sometimes we’re going to have to give a little. Sometimes they’re going to have to give a little!”

Contact Barbara Soderlin at 394-8417 or barbara.soderlin@rapiddotjournal.com.