

A Closer Look at the Borough's Legislative CIP List

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last week the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly narrowed down its state legislative capital improvement projects priority list for the 2014 legislative session. With the help of Borough Lobbyist Mark Hickey and Kodiak's Representative Alan Austerman, the assembly got a realistic idea of the state's budget this year, and narrowed the 16 potential projects down to eight.

First on the list is Phase III of the Kodiak Landfill lateral expansion. The assembly is requesting \$3 million from the state for this phase, which includes building the on-site wastewater treatment plant. Borough Manager Bud Cassidy said this project just barely missed funding last year.

"In fact they funded all the way down the list, we were tied with the city for being the next entity to be funded. So we're trying to put it back on the list in fact to see if we score better this year. Hopefully we just slide up that list and are funded, but again it's a \$3 million grant and obviously anything we can do to lower the cost to residents, users of the landfill is really what this is about."

Cassidy said the borough has taken out a number of loans on this project, and the legislative grant will help reduce the amount Kodiak will need to pay back.

Another item made an appearance on the CIP list for the first time this year. The extension of public utilities to swampy acres is intended to service potential expansion of Coast Guard housing. Cassidy said the Coast Guard is looking to build more housing in anticipation of more vessels getting stationed in Kodiak.

"It sounds like the Coast Guard is looking at stationing some of its ocean class vessels, or larger vessels in places but they're not providing a lot of the infrastructure support that goes with that, and these are ships that have a fair amount of sailors and families."

Assemblywoman Carol Austerman, who sits on the Kodiak Housing Task Force, said this project made the cut because she feels it plays a key

role in helping alleviate the housing crisis in Kodiak.

“We’ve been struggling with ways to address this and it’s a huge problem in our community because it trickles down and there’s a trickle down effect financially for a lot of people. So the cost of housing, the fact that there’s very few apartments available, the fact that there are few housing options that are in kind of a lower dollar figure. And so in trying to address that through the housing task force, this option came up about the Coast Guard being willing to do a public/private partnership to build more Coast Guard housing.”

She said it’s a win/win situation for Kodiak, but there are no utilities in the area the Coast Guard is looking to build.

“It’s a minor investment, big picture for our community, to have a big impact and I think it’s a very valid project to have on our CIP list this year and at a higher number than a lower one.”

The borough estimates the whole project will cost around \$5 million and is asking the state for \$500,000 during this legislative session.

Tune in to KMXT tomorrow as we continue hearing discussions about various projects included in the eight-item CIP list the assembly hopes to approve during Thursday’s regular meeting.