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Council approves \$45K for surveying work

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The Oak Ridge City Council voted 6-1 on Monday to chip in about another \$32,000 for surveying work in west Oak Ridge.

The surveys are needed before roads and water and wastewater systems at the East Tennessee Technology Park can be transferred to the city this year, possibly in May.

The Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee had asked the city to pay up to \$50,000 to help in the first phase of the utility systems survey. CROET's request was equal to about one half the current estimated cost of the work at the U.S. Department of Energy's former K-25 site.

But Oak Ridge City Manager Jim O'Connor said the city had agreed to pay half of the original estimated amount, which was \$27,000. Half of that would have been \$13,500.

"It is my opinion that the city should not bear any further costs associated with the transfer of these 60-year-old facilities that will become our responsibility to operate and maintain," O'Connor said in a memo to City Council members.

Lawrence Young, CROET's chief executive officer and president, said the \$27,000 estimate was "grossly underestimated."

"Unfortunately, the original estimate, done more than two years ago, was provided without full information regarding the effort necessary to survey all of the lines and easements to allow for the orderly conversion of the various systems," Young said in a December letter to O'Connor.

Young said the current estimate to perform all the surveys is:

- \$28,720.30 for sanitary sewer system,
- \$57,500 for sanitary and fire water systems, and
- \$62,600 for roads.

"We are currently working to reduce and/or defer some of the costs associated with the survey of the sanitary and fire water system," Young said.

Oak Ridge City Councilwoman Jane Miller made the motion to raise the amount the city contributes for the surveying work from \$13,500 to \$45,756.

Oak Ridge City Councilwoman Ellen Smith voted against Miller's proposal.

She said the total cost of the surveying work, which could be close to \$150,000, is a high transaction cost when money will be needed for utility systems operation and maintenance.

"I'd rather see the money go to real stuff like that rather than paper," Smith said.

But U.S. Department of Energy representative Susan Cange said the surveying work is necessary to establish legal descriptions of the utility systems.

“This is something that is needed in order to allow the department to grant the easement,” she said.

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