

# CMP aims to clean up Washington Street property in 2016

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By Ben Holbrook

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City officials Dec. 1 approved a request to close a section of Washington Street to allow Central Maine Power to clean up a property that was contaminated by the company's former coal gasification plant.

The contaminated soils are located on the Dale C. Palmer Living Trust property and extend into the road bed on Washington Street. A Phase 1 and Phase II Brownfields Assessment revealed the contaminated soils, according to a memorandum from City Planner Wayne Marshall.

Once work begins, CMP estimates it will cost about \$1.8 million to \$2.1 million and take several months to clean up the property

Because of the extent of the construction that will be taking place on Washington Street during the cleanup, CMP asked city officials to consider two options for closing the street to public traffic.

The first option, and the one preferred by the city and CMP, would be to close a section of the street from late January 2016 to June 15, 2016. A second option would close the same section from Oct. 15, 2016, to March 31, 2017. However, Marshall said the only reason CMP might pursue the second option is if they are unable to find a contractor in time to begin work in January 2016.

At the height of the cleanup, Marshall estimated there could be as many as 25 to 30 trucks leaving the site per day.

“This is gonna be temporary disruption,” Marshall said. “But hopefully after the temporary disruption what there is is there's a permanent improvement that's helped address a long-standing environmental concern that's been in the area.”

The cleanup will also have an impact on access to the skate park.

"There's likely gonna be the need to keep the skate park closed for a period of time when spring comes around because of the amount of construction activity in the area and not wanting to encourage people being down here any more than what they really need to be," Marshall said.

Washington Street will be closed between the entrance to the city parking lot and the far end of the skate park. The public will continue to be able to access the city parking lot during cleanup efforts, Marshall said. Access to the rear of the buildings situated along Main and High streets will still be available.

On-street parking between the entrance to the parking lot and the intersection of Main Street will be prohibited.

A temporary walkway running behind the skate park will allow pedestrians to bypass construction activity.

Councilors discussed at some length the standards to which the walkway should be constructed before Steve Kelly of Haley & Aldrich, CMP's consultant on the cleanup, offered to have the company construct a covered walkway, noting the cost to do so is insignificant when compared to how much the company is spending on the project overall.

One resident, Tammy Lacher Scully, whose property abuts the site, voiced her concerns about the project to councilors. Her concerns related to potential health hazards associated with uncovering and removing the contaminated soils.

Kelly said the contaminated soils are not a hazardous material as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environmental Protection. However, he and Marshall acknowledged uncovering the contaminated soils will release odors that are “somewhat unpleasant.”

Even though the materials are not hazardous, as stated by Kelly, CMP will require the contractor to minimize the amount of dust generated during the clean up because the contaminant, which he said is a viscous, coal tar substance, could stick to the particles.

To that end, the contractor will monitor along the perimeter of the project and either wet down the soil or use specialty foams to control the amount of dust in the air.

In addition to CMP's efforts to clean up of the property, Diane Bergey and Eunice Palmer, trustees to the 1.3-acre Dale C. Palmer Living Trust property on Washington Street, plan to demolish an existing warehouse and construct a new four-story building with retail shops and apartments on the land, according to previously published reports. That redevelopment cannot happen until CMP cleans up the area where its coal gasification plant once operated.

Councilors approved closing Washington Street from late January 2016 to June 15, 2016.

### **Brownfield Revolving Loan**

Economic Development Director Thomas Kittredge said he has been working to secure a \$250,000 Brownfields Revolving Loan from Maine Department of Economic and Community Development on behalf of the Palmer Trust.

The process has taken longer than hoped, Kittredge said, but DECD recently said the city has a direct role in how the funds are handled. He compared the process to what Belfast did with an \$800,000 grant received on behalf of OnProcess Technology.

"I would not expect this to be more than a handful of reimbursement transactions and minimal administrative burden on city staff," Kittredge said. "We will know before we write a check for \$100,000 to Diane Bergey, we know we'll get \$100,000 from the state and be made whole."

The money will be used for the demolition of the warehouse and removal of some hazardous materials.

Councilors then authorized Kittredge to advance payments and file for reimbursement on behalf of the Palmer Trust related to the loan.

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