

Town prepares for water line to I-10

Grand Ridge held groundbreaking ceremony Thursday



Deborah Buckhalter/Floridan

Grand Ridge breaks ground on water line extension project

Grand Ridge Mayor Wayne Edenfield, left, Northwest Florida Water Management District representative John Alter, Grand Ridge Town Councilwoman Kim Applewhite, fellow board member Jim Neel, USDA Area Director Tim Rogers, Grand Ridge Councilman Thomas Peaden and Grand Ridge Town Manager J.R. Moneyham take part in a groundbreaking ceremony to formalize the start of a water line extension project. Almost two miles of line will be added, stretching the city's line to the Interstate-10 exchange off State Road 69 South, where several properties have been annexed into the city limits.



Town prepares for water line to I-10
Deborah Buckhalter /
Jackson County Floridan

- Posted on Nov 6, 2014

by [Deborah Buckhalter](#)

Citing the tenacity of Grand Ridge Town Manager J.R. Moneyham in pursuing the project, USDA Area Director Tim Rogers was one of two keynote speakers at a Thursday groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of a water line extension to the Interstate 10 exchange in that community.

With a series of annexations making the extension possible on the ground, Grand Ridge secured money from a number of sources to make it happen.

A \$321,339 grant from the Northwest Florida Water Management District provided the bulk of the funding, along with a \$108,699 grant from USDA's Rural Development fund. NFWMD's Jonathan Steverson also spoke at the gathering Tuesday.

Both Rogers and Steverson talked about the two main benefits of adding almost two miles of water line. Not only will it help existing businesses at the interchange, and potentially some residences along the way, it sets the stage for future growth on State Road 69 South, where the I-10 ramp provides an exit into town.

Moneyham also spoke of those benefits, and used some of his time at the podium to thank a small but committed community organization that has agreed to sacrifice \$10,000 if necessary to help the city meet the match it must

contribute in order to receive the state and federal dollars. Grand Ridge must contribute \$66,339. The East Jackson County Development Council has agreed to give the town \$10,000 if the town finds itself unable to meet the match on its own.

Melvin Engineering designed the project.

Bids for the construction phase were expected to be opened Thursday afternoon and the town could decide who to hire at its meeting on Nov. 13. The work should begin toward the first of 2015, with 150 days projected for the job.

Moneyham said the city will then try to access grant funds to run sewer lines along the same area.

A restaurant and the old Golden Lariat western store, now closed but up for sale, and a couple of convenience stores are located in the area. A hotel is also in the area, but did not opt into annexation, which zigzags along the east and west sides of SR 69 South and reaches from the old city limits to I-10.

The residences that line in the path to I-10 will have the option of tapping into the city water line, but water rates and tap fees for doing that have not yet been determined.

Moneyham said he felt that the extension of the water service could help property owners see lower insurance premiums since the service could favorably affect insurance ratings.

“ We’re very excited to finally get the funding for this,” Moneyham said. “We tried three times. The water management district had a big part in and worked with USDA to fund it. They’re working together to help small communities expand their services, and we were really appreciative that the East Jackson County Development Council is willing to help us meet our obligation on the city side. It’s a small organization and \$10,000 is a lot of money. It’s happening because a series of entities saw the need, the immediate benefit and the bigger picture, and decided to help.”

Following Thursday’s ceremony, those who attended were invited to a gathering with refreshments at the Grand Ridge Community Center near city hall. The ceremony had been held a few miles away near the targeted work area on SR69 South. The town’s beauty pageant representatives helped carry out the ground-breaking ceremony, shoveling a scoop of dirt after town council members, USDA and NWFMD representatives dug in for the first scoop