Donaldsonville awarded $745,911 for sewer project

By TIM TALLEY
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DONALDSONVILLE — The largest community development grant awarded by the state of Louisiana this year will go to this Ascension Parish city to pay for extensive sewer repairs and expansion, authorities said Tuesday night.

Mayor Claude L. “Toby” Bourg told the city’s Commission Council that Donaldsonville was awarded $745,911 for the sewer project, the largest single grant issued by the Louisiana Community Development Block Grant program.

About $300,000 will fund sewer line improvements to clear up obstructions and stop infiltration. The remainder will pay for extending sewer service to areas that do not have it, including the Barcelona, Burns and River Oaks subdivisions, Bourg said.

“The federal government says you clean up your act and we’ll give you the money,” Bourg said. Although administered by the state, the grant program is funded by the federal government.

Commission Council members adopted a pair of resolutions to comply with grant requirements. They included a standard federal procurement policy and advertisements for an administrator and engineer for the project.

Administration and engineering fees are set by the state and the administrator and engineer will be selected by their qualifications.

City officials heaped praise on federal programs coordinator Roberto Macedo and engineer Glynn Shaheen, who prepared the grant application.

“He’s some kind of genius,” Bourg said of Macedo.

The grant money is badly needed to finance sewer improvements that the city otherwise would have had to accomplish with revenues from the city’s $4.75 monthly sewer user fee and general fund.

“We’re undergoing extensive major repairs at extensive cost,” Bourg said. Part of the city’s sewer system was built in 1929, and the cost of maintaining the system has risen dramatically in recent years.

“It’s a terrific need that we have” to improve the sewer system, the mayor said.

The grant also will make possible extension of sewer service to residents who have requested it but who are unable to afford the cost of installation.

Macedo said construction probably will begin this spring or summer. Streets in areas that will receive new sewer service will be repaired once sewer lines are installed.

“This may take a year and it may take a year and a half before they’re finished,” Bourg said.

On another matter, the council took no action on a proposal by T.F. Management Co. of Mansfield to build a 32-unit low-rent apartment complex for the elderly in Donaldsonville.

Bourg said a proposal to build the complex just outside the city limits was turned down for a government-backed low-interest construction loan because the area was too remote.

He said developers are looking for three acres of property inside the city limits for the complex. The developers did not attend the council’s meeting.

Units would be available for moderate-income elderly residents at a rental cost of $195-$250 a month, Bourg said.

In other action, the Commission Council:

- Revealed plans by Jones Intercable to increase basic cable television rates from $11.25 to $13 a month, beginning March 1.
- Approved a letter of no objection for the Louisiana Army National Guard to construct a metal equipment building adjacent to its armory.
- Announced the scheduled appearance of the Boy’s Choir of Douai, France, at the Ascension Catholic Church on July 12.