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County awards \$1.8 million resurfacing contract, first of 15 capital-improvement projects expected to total up to \$70 million

The Sarasota County Commission Tuesday awarded the contract for a major resurfacing project, one of 15 capital-improvement projects advertised for bids over the last two months that are expected to result in contract awards totaling up to \$70 million by the end of the first quarter of 2009. Five of the projects, including the \$1.8 million Swift Road resurfacing contract approved Tuesday, will be funded in part by the penny surtax (1-cent sales tax) as part of the county's economic stimulus program of fast-track projects.

Bids on the largest project will be opened today, as part of the county's ramped-up capital improvement program. That is the estimated \$24 million Central County Solid Waste Disposal Complex Phase 2 project for expansion of the county landfill.

Preparations for receiving proposals on another huge project – the estimated \$20 million for design and construction of Honore Avenue improvements – also are well under way. On Friday, Dec. 12, the county will receive qualifications of firms that are interested in submitting detailed proposals for the project early next year. The project involves construction of a new section of Honore Avenue from Bee Ridge Road to Colonial Oaks Boulevard, and reconstruction and widening of the road from Colonial Oaks Boulevard to just south of the Fruitville Road intersection, as well as other improvements, including streetlights, sidewalks, stormwater pipes and ponds and a new bridge over Phillippi Creek.

Capital Management Services Executive Director Jim Harriott told the board that up to this time, he was advised that 30 capital projects was the most the county ever advertised and awarded in a single year.

"In the two months since the start of this fiscal year (in October), we have advertised 15 projects with another five projects planned to be advertised in the month of December," Harriott wrote in an e-mail to the commission this week.

Ten projects, including the Honore Avenue improvements, were advertised for bids in November alone. The other projects and their estimated costs are: Albee Road Lift Stations 1 and 2 improvements, \$541,000; Bee Ridge and Wilkinson roads sidewalks, \$483,000; resurfacing of north and south county roads, including roads around Area A of the Phillippi Creek Septic System Replacement Program, \$3.8 million; Shamrock Drive shoulders and sidewalks, \$420,000; landscaping along U.S. 41 in Venice, \$125,000; Area D, Phase II, Phillippi Creek Septic System Replacement Program, and Webber Street sidewalks and neighborhood enhancements, total of \$5.8 million; Central County Water Reclamation Facility, Class V deep exploratory well, \$3.5 million; Englewood Community Redevelopment Agency stormwater improvements, \$4.9 million; and the Lakewood Ranch elevated water tank rehabilitation, \$424,000.

Four of those projects are part of the economic stimulus program. They include the sidewalks in the Bee Ridge and Wilkinson road areas, the resurfacing of roads in north and south county, landscaping along U.S. 41 in Venice and the Webber Street sidewalks and neighborhood enhancements.

In addition to the 10 projects in November, bids were advertised in October on five other projects, including the \$1.8 million contract awarded Tuesday for resurfacing Swift Road from Bee Ridge to Stickney Point roads. That contract was awarded to Florida Highway Products, Inc. Three other projects have awards pending. Those include the central Nokomis northeast water distribution system, \$1 million; James Street area sewer improvements, \$340,000; and the University Wellfield rehabilitation, \$983,000.

County voters in May approved plans by the county to borrow up to \$300 million to fast track dozens of projects over 72 months to create more than 2,000 jobs and stimulate the local economy.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask about the county's capital improvement projects and the economic stimulus program.

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