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## Fall River gets \$3M state loan pegged for water improvement projects

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The expected funding is part of \$77.5 million in state and federal grants and loans for Massachusetts infrastructure projects.

For Fall River, it bolsters the 1.6 miles of water main replacements, the upgrading of the four forced main arteries to the water treatment plant and updating of the long-range master plan for future construction, said Terrance Sullivan, community utilities administrator.

The eight roads where mains will be replaced include about 3,000 feet of America and Foote streets, he said.

Since its inception in 2000, through this year, about 55 miles of water mains dating back to the 19th century have been replaced.

"It's fantastic what we've gotten done, but we still have a lot to do," Sullivan said.

He estimated another 70 miles need to be replaced under what was dubbed the "42-7" plan to replace 42 miles in seven years under former Mayor Edward Lambert Jr.

The way the program works, through a State Revolving Fund of eligible projects, the city receives 2 percent loans over 20 years from funds managed by the Department of Environmental Protection and Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust.

The bulk of those funds go toward pollution control for infrastructure improvements like the city's Combined \$185 million Sewer Overlay Project.

New Bedford, Attleboro and Chicopee received between \$16-20 million for similar projects under this \$77.5 million round of funding, along with smaller water projects in Eastham, Lawrence and Fall River, state Treasurer Steven Grossman recently announced.

"Clean water is fundamental to the health and well being of Massachusetts citizens, and these low-interest loans will allow more communities to finance needed drinking and wastewater projects," Grossman said.

The original program contained zero-interest loans, but they were modified to stretch funds to reach more communities, Sullivan said.

He added, however, that in addition to the loans, the city water project is eligible for Environmental Justice Community Program grant funds.

Two years ago that program reduced the principal owed by 34 percent or \$1.1 million, and last year by 9.5 percent (or \$431,000), he said.

It won't be known until later this year how much of the Phase 12 project costs may be reduced.

The city's Phase 12 water infrastructure work for 2013 actually totalled nearly \$5 million, Sullivan said.

The list of big ticket items not eligible for state low-interest loan funding includes: \$843,000 for paving, \$590,000 for stabilization work on the circa 1873 water pump station and \$415,000 for design work.

That design work includes planning for replacement of the Fall River Industrial Park water tank on Airport Road to improve water pressure at both that complex and the new SouthCoast Life Science and Technology Park at Fall River off Route 24.

These will be the last of the city water tanks to be rehabilitated or replaced under this program.

Sullivan said they expect design construction to be done by the end of the year, bid solicitation this winter and construction to begin in the spring.

Most years the water main construction and related work is typically done by the end of that calendar year, he said.

Some paving work can require a carryover until the following spring.

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