

Fire system costs cut at new scale house

By Melissa Cassutt | Posted: Wednesday, September 16, 2015 4:30 am

Teton County commissioners approved funding needed to install fire sprinklers and related infrastructure in a building being erected as part of the redevelopment of the Horsethief Canyon trash transfer station.

The \$25,337 contract is a much smaller award for MD Landscaping and Excavation, of Driggs, Idaho, than what was being discussed a week ago.

Commissioners balked at a recent request for a change order that would have awarded the contractor a \$350,000 contract. They thought the cost high and unsettled.

The morning that Heather Overholser, chief of the county's Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling division, planned to ask for a change order, the company said it wanted to renegotiate for a higher fee.

The issue is an example of the many moving parts involved in an ongoing project, Overholser said. This particular hurdle originally stemmed from a misunderstanding that the 6,000-square-foot scale house didn't need a fire-suppression system, which was an oversight on the division's part.

According to Teton County regulations, all buildings over 5,000-square-feet require fire suppression, she said.

In an attempt to keep the project on track, Overholser's division tried to work out a deal with the contractor that would pay for the installation of needed infrastructure in the scale house, as well as the water tanks necessary to run the system. The unofficial agreement was to not exceed \$350,000.

Overholser had budgeted \$300,000 for the water tanks, so the deal would have increased the overall budget by \$50,000 to cover the costs of the sprinkler system needed in the scale house, she said.

However, the contractor's about-face in the 11th hour caused commissioners to decline a change order.

What commissioners approved during their Tuesday meeting certainly saved money in the short term, but it may also have landed the county a long-term savings, as well.

The contract will pay only for the sprinkler system in the scale house and piping needed to connect to the water tanks, but the water tanks themselves and the fire-suppression system for the transfer station will be bid out together this winter, as originally planned.

“This did work out better than doing a contract amendment for the full fire-suppression system,”

Overholser said. “My hope is that we see good pricing because it is a much larger overall scope of work when it’s attached to the larger trash transfer station.”

The fire suppression system will not be functional until the spring, so Overholser had to obtain an extended certificate of temporary occupancy. However, none of these changes should delay any parts of the project, she said.