

The

Examiner

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"IF I WERE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER OR A NEWSPAPER WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT, I WOULD NOT HESITATE TO CHOOSE THE LATTER." THOMAS JEFFERSON

50 cents
May 30, 2007

City hosts annual
Fine Arts Show
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East, North honor
Class of 2007
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1st Street utilities project almost complete

By Larry Andersen

Both lanes of Route 31 are now shut down and will remain closed through the weekend and into next week as Benchmark Construction finishes the final phase of the utility work project that began last October. All traffic is detoured to the east side of the river.

"This is the last stand for the contractor," said City Engineer Greg Chismark.

Chismark added there is a chance the

Benchmark crews will be paving the street on Monday, June 4, but he said that is a best-case scenario.

The construction that started last October was implemented to update and repair the utilities underneath 1st Street and other portions of the downtown area to support the new 1st Street Redevelopment Project. Although the large project has been an even larger headache for residents, business owners, and shoppers,

Chismark said the timing of the construction could not have been better.

The project began just after Scarecrow Fest last October and will be completed just before the Pride of the Fox Festival coming up next weekend.

"It's good to get this all out of the way," Chismark said. "Although utility work is not exciting, it feels good having completed this first element of

the 1st Street Project."

After the utility work is completed next week, city crews will start to tear up street and road bed on the southern end of 1st Street to rebuild the street to its final appearance. That work is expected to last through November.

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1st Street

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Chismark said there has been a valuable lesson learned working on a large-scale project such as the 1st Street utility construction. He said communication is the key.

"There were areas where we could improve communicating," Chismark said. "We just didn't do a good enough job communicating in the beginning, but we're doing it now."

Chismark added that the project went as smoothly as one could hope for, except for exciting moments such as utility crews busting through a gas main that had parts of the downtown area evacuated.