

Chilhowie moves forward with veterans memorial, walking trail projects

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Plans for a veterans' memorial and a walking trail are moving forward in Chilhowie.

At Thursday's meeting of Chilhowie Town Council, Mayor Gary Heninger said the monument for the veterans' memorial arrived that day and work will begin on the site next to the town hall where the memorial will be constructed.

Hopes are to have the memorial completed by Veterans Day on Nov. 11, said Heninger, for a dedication following the Veterans Day service at town hall.

The monument design chosen by council for the memorial is about four feet high and three feet wide with an eight-foot base that will have bricks that can be removed for engraving and be re-installed on the memorial. Flag poles flying the American and Virginia flags are set to be installed on either side of the monument.

Council set aside \$8,000 in the town budget for the memorial and fundraisers have been held and are being planned. Donations have been offered by businesses and individuals and are being accepted for the memorial along with names to be engraved on the bricks. Citizens can call town hall at 646-3232 for more information.

Construction may also get started soon on the planned H.L. Bonham Tourism Trail from the Smyth County Tourism Center (in the old Bonham house) to Chilhowie Recreational Park.

The Virginia Department of Transportation rejected the bid chosen by the town last month due to incomplete paperwork so the project was rebid. The low bid was again from King General Contractors Inc., of Bristol, but at \$399,730.61 was \$10,000 higher than their first bid.

Council member Charlie Doane said he was not happy that the bid was so much higher, saying the town seemed to be paying for the contractor's mistake in the paperwork.

Jeff Spickard with The Lane Group reporting on the project to council said he was surprised it was not even higher and could have been \$90,000 higher than the original and still been the lowest bid.

John Clark, town manager, said the contractors thought they were in compliance and were just as shocked as he and the council when VDOT rejected the bid. That's why he invited VDOT representatives to the pre-bid conference this time to explain exactly what was needed.

The board approved the bid and has prepared a letter for VDOT about the choice of a contractor. Once

VDOT approves the bid work can begin. Because of the delay in the bid process the trail may not be completed until next year.