



CITY OF PEEKSKILL
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

John G. Testa
Mayor

Peekskill's Central Avenue Open for Business and Traffic.

Project Leaps Myriad Hurdles to Meet FEMA Deadline.

Strong New "Box Culvert" Will Resolve Many of the Problems that Have Bedeviled
Street for Decades.

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PEEKSKILL, NY— By literally leaping some almost insurmountable bureaucratic and construction hurdles, the Peekskill Bureau of Public Works and its subcontractors has completed the rebuilding of Central Avenue in time to meet a crucial deadline and in a way that should last indefinitely.

"Central Avenue is a vital street, and the Common Council wanted to fix it in a way that was as permanent as we could possibly manage," says Peekskill Mayor John Testa. "I'm pleased to say that I think we've done that."

McGregroy's Brook runs under Central Avenue, making the street very vulnerable to flood damage. The street got a one-two punch as devastating storms overloaded a fragile 19th century brick culvert, digging out the ground underneath it and destroying large stretches of roadway.

Now Central Avenue rests on top of a sophisticated 5 foot by 16 foot box culvert that can withstand tremendous pressure and volume. The new culvert has the ability to hold tremendous amounts of water, and can withstand enormous strains, says David Greener, Peekskill's director of city services, bureau of public works.

Getting that box culvert installed was a tremendously challenging and difficult project, Greener says. In the same way that people rebuilding a house often find unpleasant surprises, Central Avenue presented almost a shock a day to the people working on it. Because it is one of Peekskill's oldest streets, Central Avenue is honeycombed with sewers and water pipes and wiring and other facilities, some of which were installed decades ago and many of which have never been recorded.

"We found some clay water pipes. We found some lead water lines," says Dave Furfaro, the president of Fourmen Construction Inc., the contractor who did the actual construction on the project.

One of the other things the City found was a large and pressurized Westchester County sewer line. Organizations that install and maintain sewer systems are very protective of them, and the original design of the new Central Avenue culvert used eight-foot pipes that would have required rerouting of the delicate county system.

Getting permission to do that might have taken years and relocating all the pipes could have cost millions of dollars, so Peekskill went back to the drawing board and chose the box culvert, which is shallow enough not to impact on the County line nor relocation of various utilities. The problem was that Peekskill now faced a serious deadline. The project had to be completed by Sept. 19 to meet a deadline set by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is providing funding for the effort since Hurricane Floyd did the original damage.

“Fourmen was actually our saving grace here. They completed the job in a phenomenally short period of time,” Greener says. “They came in and fast tracked us as far as design and construction and finished within the deadline,” he says.

Greener and Furfaro also singled out project engineer Matt Noviello, of Noviello and Noviello for praise, as well as project supervisor Parry Segura, supervisor. Also getting gratitude were Consolidated Edison and Verizon, which responded quickly and effectively to all of the City’s requests for assistance.

“Con Ed and Verizon, they could have really held the project up and put us through a tremendous amount of red tape. Instead they expedited things and got them done just as we needed them done,” Greener says. He singled out Con Ed’s construction manager, Dominick Ardeno, for special praise.

Central Avenue is a business, not a residential street, and the companies located on it say they are happy with the work that has been done. “I’m glad they did what they did. They all worked very hard and they pretty much did what they said they were going to do,” says Jeff Dain, president of Dain’s Lumber, one of the county’s oldest lumberyards and construction supply companies.

“They did a big, good job. Everybody was down here, and they were working. Nobody was standing on any rakes, nobody was standing on any shovels,” Dain says. “The system they have in place will work,” he says.

Still, though Central Avenue should stay intact, there is a good chance buildings will occasionally get wet, City officials and local businesspeople say. “Everybody knows we’re in a flood plain down here, so if there is a storm, there is a flood,” Dain says.

“Now, however, there will be a street for people to drive on even if there is a flood,” Mayor Testa says. “With the Lincoln Train Station project moving forward and our efforts to better connect the waterfront with the rest of the city gathering momentum, Central Avenue is more important than ever before, and I’m glad we’ve done such a thorough job.”

Note: Photos available upon request.

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