

Packed house gets update on proposed North Shore Chelan Substation

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Chelan Council Chambers was packed with residents interested in updates on Chelan County PUD's North Shore Chelan Substation. (Photo by Richard Uhlhorn)

“We don't want to build infrastructure too soon or build something we don't need,” said Chad Rissman of the Chelan County PUD. “We could be five years out, but it is time to start planning.”

Rissman was speaking to approximately 50 residents who were attending the North Shore Chelan Substation Community Meeting and Project Update in Chelan City Council Chambers on Tuesday afternoon prior to the City Council meeting.

Chelan PUD's Andy Wendell explained to the group that the update meeting would let the community know where the process is, where it has been and where it is going. “We've done a lot of discovery. Our desired outcome is to understand why we need another substation in Chelan,” said Wendell.



Chelan PUD Managing Director of Customer Utilities John Stoll updated the public attending the community meeting on the need for a new substation to help serve the needs of Chelan’s North Shore. (Photo by Richard Uhlhorn)

A PUD focus group of Chelan residents and officials was formed to figure out the best potential locations for a new substation, which will take up approximately one acre of land.

The Wapato substation located on Swartout Road in Manson is at 70 percent capacity whereas the Union Valley substation is at 80 percent capacity. With the increased residential development, Chelan PUD was triggered into planning for the next substation on the system.

“We need to place it where the demand is,” said Rissman. He said that without a new substation in the near future (possibly five years down the road) that there could be brownouts and perhaps even failure on the system. “We are trying to avoid that and do early planning,” said Rissman.



Chelan resident Steve Firman spoke for the PUD’s community focus group regarding the need for a new substation on the North Shore of Lake Chelan. (Photo by Richard Uhlhorn)

Steve Firman, a Chelan resident and spokesperson for the focus group said, “I’ve come to believe that we need a new substation.” To illustrate his point he used a photographic print taken in 1972 from Bear Mountain showing how little development existed at that time, and another night photograph taken from the South Shore recently that shows the extent of development since 1972.

“We’ve narrowed it down to three areas,” stated Firman. “The PUD’s open to mitigation.” Mitigation could include lower lighting around the station and more expenditures on quieter transformers.

The group was given a map showing all of the locations that were considered and the three locations that are considered the prime areas close to existing transmission lines.



Chelan PUD map showing all proposed locations for a North Shore substation, and the three locations that are considered the prime areas close to existing transmission lines. (Image courtesy of Chelan PUD)

One resident stated that Site #9/10 was on his property, and he had no idea that was a location being looked at prior to this meeting. Wendell stated that was the kind of input needed from the meeting.

“We will want to talk to you about that,” remarked Wendell. “Number 9 and 10 are one of the three sites where we haven’t reached out to all the property owners yet.”

Site #7 is located between Henderson Road and the transmission line off Boyd Road, and the property owner there indicated he was not willing to sell property to the Chelan PUD for the substation.

Another resident asked how they would come to the conclusion of where the substation will be constructed? Wendell replied that was why the community meeting was needed to help locate the new site. “We didn’t talk to you... we are talking to you now to get your input,” said Wendell.



Andy Wendell discussed the next steps in the process of selecting a site for a new PUD substation on the North Shore of Lake Chelan. (Photo by Richard Uhlhorn)

Wendell told those in attendance that the PUD and the focus group had made a commitment to bring back three viable sites. The next step is to hire a professional services firm to come up with cost estimates and mitigation costs. “We are hoping to bring those design estimates back to you in the fall,” said Wendell.

The residents were urged to go to Chelan PUD’s website and make comments on the proposed project at www.chelanpud.org/NewChelanSubstation. Residents can also sign up to be on Chelan PUD’s North Shore Chelan Substation email list by contacting Teka Parks at teka.parks@chelanpud.org or by calling 509.661.4294.

(By Richard Uhlhorn)