

Community gives two cents on three proposed PUD substations

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Distribution Engineering Manager Chad Rissman points to the type of structure that will have to be implemented to be stout enough to hold the extra distribution and transmission line.



Gary Rice, who is the principle engineer working on the project shared information on each site at the Feb. 22 meeting.

By:

Zach Johnson, Staff writer

“At that period of time, we need to be building a new substation,” Stoll stated. “When you look at the active planning and construction stage, if we started in the fall it would take two years to complete, so we will be a bit nip and tuck. It is not a position that we want to be in, we have an obligation to serve, but if we get to a point, it would be unfortunate, but a power moratorium. I don’t think we have ever experienced that but our number one charge is safe reliable power and an obligation to serve, but we can’t put our system at risk.”

CHELAN - Time is running out.

Those are the words Customer Utilities Managing Director John Stoll uttered in reference to installing a North Shore Chelan Substation.

“We have identified as an agency goal, three critical milestones. By the end of March we would like to have the preferred site, understanding the process to acquire the land, and ultimately start procuring equipment this fall, so that is a lot to get through,” Stoll said at the end of the public meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 22.

The reason for the sense of urgency is because the two transmission lines that feed the Wapato and Chelan Valley Substation are running almost at capacity, with days in January higher than 80 percent.

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As a result, the Chelan PUD has been working over the past year and a half to look at various locations for a new substation along the North Shore of Lake Chelan. The three sites the community looked at with their initial price tag were Washington Federal (\$12,327,000), Chelan Heights (\$9,108,000) and Uhrich Orchard (\$12,304,000). All figures were with the projected cost of land acquisition built in. The goal of the meeting was not to select a site, but to just get feedback.

“We hired an engineering company to do preliminary engineering work on each site and give us the earthwork, substation, distribution and transmission costs for each location,” Consultant Gary Rice said. “Each site is a one acre lot, which will allow us to put in another transformer on site in the future.”

For those that don’t know, the distribution costs refers to replacing the poles because they couldn’t carry the additional circuit at code, so the PUD would have to replace them with a taller, and more stout structure that could hold the distribution and transmission lines. At the same time, going totally underground is out of the question as well because the PUD matches with the already existing lines.

“What we assume is that where they are exiting overhead now, we would keep those and if they were underground, we would match that with underground,” Stoll said.

How did they get those three specific sites?

“What we did is send mailers out, when we were unable to find a site on our own we sent mailers out and these property owners contacted us and said to come take a look at the site. All three sites require exiting transmission line to be beefed up, higher poles and a lower distribution line.”

- Washington Federal

The location of the site is on Washington Federal Bank property - hence the name - and is located right above the golf course.

Although the PUD has not negotiated a price on the property, the bank instructed the PUD to do analysis on the site. Despite the Washington Federal location being the most costly of the three, resident Michael Gibb advised not basing the decision on cost.

“My reason is that we shouldn’t look away from one of the sites based on these costs that you have come up with so far, because it very well could be that in the end the total cost - with land acquisition - might be in the middle of the pack,” Gibb insisted.

However, Rice assured that they added a 20 percent contingency to the top of each cost with a 30 percent contingency for transmission cost.

- Chelan Heights

"It is located off to the side of an orchard that is not being used and is located better than the other sites as far as distribution it built, but there would still be some development," Rice stated. "We would have to rebuild the distribution line and the existing transmission line, which I want to make sure this is one line that will cross in front of some properties that have homes on them."

- Uhrich

"Uhrich is on the upper line (Chelan Wapato) but as we tried to figure circuits, we had to come down and then back along the same as Chelan Heights," Rice said. "We are assuming that we will have to replace several of the poles, but the property lays out fairly nice and give opportunity for shielding along the roadway."

Gibb, who has been apart of the majority of the North Shore Substation process, requested residents and the PUD to look at past history and other substations.

"Think of the South Shore Substation, and think about how remote that station is, it is tucked into a valley that is not visible and it doesn't have a visible impact on the community," Bibb said. "When you go up to look at the Uhrich site, you'll see that this is ticked in an area that is very remote and has a very low potential for visual impact on a neighborhood or residents."

"I know we have a short term goal to help the Board of Commissioners make the best choice and get going on purchasing the land, but I think we have to have a long term goal also. To have some long range planning, (we should) purchase two sites, one for now and one for the intermediate or long term future. If we do then all of the transmission and distribution talks would change. If you have one north of the load line, and one southeast, your distribution lines and costs associated would be different from what we looked at today. Cost is a definite obstacle, but history is a good teacher if we pay attention. The majority of pushback is based on aesthetics, visual impact and access and those future obstacles could derail a project."

Jon Dryer echoed Gibb's sentiments in saying that the Uhrich site "as far as aesthetics is a great site. The number of miles of distribution will be a problem, but in the end you wouldn't have any kickback from the residents," Dryer said.

If you were unable to attend the meeting last Wednesday, the PUD is continuing to take public comment until March 2. More information on that or the project as a whole can be found on chelanpud.org/learning-center/in-your-neighborhood/substations/north-shore-chelan-substation.

The next public meeting - where the PUD plans to have the direction they want to go - is on March 20.

Zach Johnson can be found at lcmeditor@gmail.com or (509) 682-2213