

PUD buys Fishburne land for \$450k for possible substation

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By:
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In somewhat of a twist in the PUD substation location process, it was announced last week the PUD had reached agreement with John and Wendy Fishburne to buy their property, which sits on the intersection of North Road and Chumstick Highway, for \$450,000.

This property was not actively being considered as a site for a new substation, but it is right across highway from the two sites actively being considered, the Upper Valley MEND property and the city property at Rattlesnake Hill.

PUD Customer Outreach Specialist Teka Sellers said they were set on the MEND property when the Fishburne property became available.

“We had been given direction to pursue the MEND property. That was based on the PUD’s analysis of the site. We thought it looked promising. The community back us. We had the support of the focus group. We had the city and MEND support to move forward on that property,” Sellers said. “We happened to see this other piece of property for sale, maybe a month or so ago. We contacted the Fishburne’s about it. They said, they had other offers on the table, but if anything changed, they would contact us.”

Two weeks ago, the Fishburne’s contacted the PUD and said they were interested in the PUD buying their property for the purpose of a substation.

“It had a lot of the same characteristics, in terms where it is located, of the MEND property and city property. It is close proximity to those. We were already looking at those because they ranked high on our site criteria,” Sellers said. “Because it is in close proximity, theoretically, it would have ranked high on our site criteria.”

Some of favorable aspects of the site include the cost for the real estate. Sellers said there could be a \$1 to \$2 million price difference, which would be a big savings for the customer owners.

Some of other positive characteristics of the Fishburne site include transmission costs. Since the property is on the same side of the road as the existing substation, there would be no need to bring transmission lines across Chumstick Highway or the backside of Rattlesnake Hill.

Nonetheless, the PUD has not made a final decision on the location for a new substation.

“The MEND property, site 14, continues to be evaluated and the PUD is working through potential site boundaries and acreage with multiple property owners. The city property, site 8a, is still a viable alternative if, through further discovery, the MEND or Fishburne properties do not move forward. Neither the MEND nor city property have been purchased, but both are willing sellers,” Sellers said.

Sellers said they bought the Fishburne property because they had to act fast, per the seller's wishes.

"We went ahead and purchased basically just to preserve an option for a possible location. It is definitely not a decision," Sellers said. "It provides us an option for a lower cost site. We're still going to pursue the MEND and city properties. We're still going to do all the analysis, cost estimating and engineering, working with the property owners to find a particular site.

Once the PUD and consultants have finished analyzing the properties, Sellers said they will come back to the public before a decision is made. She said the new property purchase should not affect their timeline for the new substation.

"It would just be some added work for our engineering group and our consultant to create an analysis for that site. Because of the close proximity, in terms of the analysis, a lot of the same information can be used," Sellers said. "We can use the same transmission route. It just wouldn't be as long. The distribution routes would probably change a bit, but because we're in a different area, the work the engineer and consultant has to do is not double the work. There is a lot of similarity."

From a transmission standpoint, the line should be less visible because it doesn't have to cross Chumstick.

"When the rest of that MEND property is developed, and homes go in there, the transmission lines would not come across Chumstick. As far as the site itself, it can be seen by the road quite a bit. As far as impacting residents, there's probably a little less of an impact," Sellers said. "The bottom line is we're just preserving an option for the possible location of the substation. We're definitely going to continue our analysis in parallel with the Fishburne property. We'll get some estimates and more information in the coming months."

PUD staff is expected to make a recommendation on final site in June. The hope is to energize a new substation by 2020.

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