

# Chumstick location is preferred site for new PUD substation

Published by admin on Wed, 07/19/2017 - 3:41pm



The Chumstick location seems to provide that best cover to hide the substation from public view. (Photo submitted by Teka Sellers)

By:  
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The Chelan County PUD is zeroing in on selecting a site for the new substation in the Leavenworth area. The PUD made a presentation to the Leavenworth City Council on July 11, the same one they had made before PUD commissioners the night before.

John Stoll, the managing director of Customer Utilities, said the recommendation on the Chumstick site was made in May.

“The feasibility report supports that recommendation. We’ll talk about the next steps to talk about siting this much needed substation in the growing Leavenworth community,” Stoll said. “We’ve been at this going on two years. This is a look back since March when we really started focusing on some sites, working with the community. We met with our board in March. At that point, we had three sites.”

Initially, stakeholder feedback pointed toward site 14, the MEND site. Through March, Stoll said they were looking at property, power line easement, continuing discussions on what properties might entail moving forward.

“About that time, we did have the opportunity to discover a new property that came on the market. That is the Chumstick property that was owned by the Fishburne’s. In working with our community group, working with our board, the decision was made to purchase that site as another option,” Stoll said. “It was a pretty desirable site when we looked at all the attributes and characteristics of siting a substation. We went ahead and purchased that, realizing if it didn’t work out, we could surplus it and sell that property.”

The consultant feasibility evaluation recommended the Chumstick site, which lined up with what the focus group had preferred and endorsed as well as the PUD board.

“At this point in time, we’re recommending going forward with that Chumstick site, going to the next level, doing permit design and things of that nature,” Stoll said.

Project Engineer Gary Rice said there were 16 sites initially under consideration. That was narrowed down ultimately four sites on the backside of Rattlesnake Hill, a site owned by the city, two owned by MEND and the Chumstick site.

“We’ve looked at substation costs, earthwork costs, distribution costs, transmission costs. I summarized those into a range of costs for each site. The reason for the range is because of the variables we don’t know yet. There could be an access road or groundwater mitigation, which only applies to a few sites. Chumstick has the lowest costs,” Rice said.

Rice presented some of the findings on all the sites. At the Chumstick site, the transmission lines create a loop around town for redundancy. The purpose of the substation is to bring reliable service to the city.

“So we need to offload some of the need on the existing substation. Even if we didn’t build the second circuit, just by relieving the load on the Chumstick, relieving the load going up the North Road..that relieves quite a bit of load from the existing substation and buys time,” Rice said. “With that thought, we could also relieve some of the load coming along the Chumstick toward the city too. We could probably feed three circuits into this substation where it actually has the capacity for four. Then delay until the connector road is read to put the circuit in to Titus Road.”

The Chumstick site is 1.3 acres, which Rice said is sufficient. Since at least two connectors will eventually be crossing the road over to Titus, Rice said they have interest in a future connector road there, and are dedicating \$500,000 to that road.

Mayor Cheri Kelley Farivar asked if there were wetland issues on the site.

“There is a manmade pond in front, which takes the runoff water. That pond was created because original culvert failed. What we plan on doing is rebuilding that original culvert. There was a bunch conservation work done on the site. We plan on staying away from that,” Rice said. “There may be some permit requirements as we remove the man-made pond, because it does provide some sort of habitat. There’s probably room to do the mitigation, because it is large enough.”

Councilman Elmer Larsen asked if they are building the site with enough capacity for 15-20 years.

“Yeah, we have. Just like with the original site, it’s hard to get the power out. To get the power out, the pathway over towards Titus becomes more and more logical. If we double banked any of the sites, getting out of the backside of Rattlesnake makes a whole lot of sense,” Rice said. “When it gets into the design, we may decide it is best to put in more than two circuits in that direction.”

Larsen felt this would be a good site for the substation because it is adjacent to land that has already been zoned industrial.

“All the land to the south of this is county land, county shop, gravel pit. It’s all zoned industrial. The focus group looked pretty strongly at the industrial area, thinking it was more appropriate than the residential area,” Larsen said.

Stoll said next steps include getting a conditional use permit. They also want to get some feedback from the community group when it comes to selecting routes for the transmission lines that make sense.

One route goes along the North Road. There are several other options that look promising, Stoll said.

“We want to weigh that against the community wishes. We plan to reconvene the community group to work through that and finalize it. After the first of the year, we want to start looking at the procurement process because these things require a long lead time, the transformers, the switch gear, the control building,” Stoll said.

PUD Commissioner Steve McKenna, a former Cascade School superintendent, said they processed all the feedback and came up and looked at all the sites.

“The commission as a group is supportive of the Chumstick site. For myself, I like that site. I believe, aesthetically, it will protect and we won’t see that transmission line going across the face of Rattlesnake. I think that is important,” McKenna said. “A lot of thinking and ideas have been thrown out there. We’ll do the same thing with the transmission line process and work to come up with the best plan.”

City Administrator Joel Walinski said the Chumstick property is located just outside the city. He asked if the PUD gave any consideration to requesting annexation into the city. Stoll said he would put that on the table as something to discuss.

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