

County to study options to limit data mining

WENATCHEE — Chelan County planners will work with their counterparts in Wenatchee and other Chelan County cities to explore how changes to zoning or other rules could keep electricity-hungry data miners out of residential neighborhoods.

County commissioners agreed to support the effort Monday, following a request from Chelan County PUD General Manager Steve Wright.

County planners will see if rule changes could be coordinated with other Chelan County municipalities to limit data-mining operations to areas already wired for an industrial-level power, said Ron Walter, commission chairman.

“We basically agreed to look into whether there was anything we could do; look at the options available,” Walter said.

Data miners use racks of computers that “mine” for data by performing complex mathematical calculations around the clock. These include processors of Bitcoin digital currency transactions.

The operations require huge amounts of electricity that neighborhood power-distribution systems can’t handle without upgrades.

The miners pay for the power-system upgrades, but may vacate the space months later, leaving behind the increased power capacity that the next tenant is not likely to need.

The PUD is then faced with the higher cost of maintaining the unused upgrades or dismantling them, officials have said.