

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF BLAINE COUNTY
And
BLAINE COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSIONER
SPECIAL MEDIATION MEETING OF THE JUNE 2018 SESSION

Third Day Monday, June 11, 2018

Pursuant to Statutory Provisions, the Board of Blaine County Commissioners (BCC) met this day at 9:00 a.m. Present were Chairman Angenie McCleary, Vice-Chairman Lawrence Schoen and Commissioner Jacob Greenberg; Blaine County Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Rachel Martin and P&Z members Dick Fosbury, Pat Murphy, William Ranill, Susan Giannettino and Mark Pynn; Mediator Jeanne Jackson-Heim; Blaine County Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Tim Graves; Blaine County Land Use Administrator Tom Bergin; County Planner Allison Marks; Idaho Conservation League Conservation Associate Josh Johnson; Idaho Power Company (IPCo) Delivery Planning Manager Dave Angell, Corporate Communications Manager Lynette Standley, Regional Manager Ryan Adelman, Engineering and Construction Project Manager Tom Barber, Legal Counsel Pat Harrington, and Facility Siting Coordinator Jeff Maffuccio; John Walken; Nils Ribi; John Dondero; Alan Hogg; Len Harlig; Laura Midgly; Lloyd Betts; *Weekly Sun* Reporter Jesse Cole; and *Idaho Mountain Express* reporter Mark Dee.

Quorums of both the Blaine County Commissioners and the Blaine County Planning & Zoning Commission are present. Absent: Blaine County Planning and Zoning Commissioner Mike O'Farrell.

Chairman McCleary called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

Session Introduction

Proposed Idaho Power Transmission Line from North of Hailey to Ketchum/Sun Valley: A mediation session, requested pursuant to Idaho Code 67-6510, regarding a Public Utility Facility Conditional Use Permit Application by Idaho Power Company to construct, maintain, and operate a 138-kV, redundant transmission line from the Wood River Substation north of Hailey to the Ketchum Substation located on Sun Valley Road in Sun Valley. The transmission line is proposed to run east from the Wood River Substation to Buttercup Road, north along the west side of Buttercup Road, north along the east side of Highway 75 until it crosses to the west side of Highway 75 3/4th of a mile north of the East Fork traffic light. The proposed line would then continue north along the west side of Highway 75 to Hospital Drive, then along the east side of Hospital Drive, along the bike path between the two bridges and then either along the east side of the bike path or the west side of Highway 75 to an underground transition structure at the intersection of Highway 75 and Elkhorn Road This [proposed] transmission line will range from 4ft to up to 15ft higher than the existing power lines along this route. A fully noticed public hearing will be scheduled at a later date.

Idaho Power suggested this is the right time to rebuild the aged distribution line, and add a redundant transmission line. The capital expense is in Idaho Power's budget.

Blaine County Land Use Administrator Tom Bergin said public notice was by agenda.

Blaine County Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Tim Graves said this is a facilitated discussion to see if the parties can find common ground. No final decisions will be made.

Project Application

The application is for a 138,000 volts transmission line in Blaine County, originating from the Wood River substation heading north to the Ketchum city limits. The transmission line will follow existing distribution line rights-of-way, except for a section along Hospital Drive where there are no existing distribution poles. The transmission line would go underground at Elkhorn Road into Ketchum.

1 Bergin said this application was "Option 1" in an earlier application process, which was denied by the
2 Blaine County Planning and Zoning, and denied in appeal by the Blaine County Board of
3 Commissioners. Idaho Power subsequently introduced their proposed reapplication for a transmission
4 line conditional use permit to Blaine County Planning and Zoning and County Commissioners at a
5 workshop in early February 2018.
6

7 Idaho Power policy is that areas of service more than 40MW should have redundant transmission
8 service. In 2007, Idaho Power started a planning process to look at longer term electric needs in the
9 Wood River Valley. This produced two transmission lines projects, one from the Midpoint Substation
10 south of Shoshone and a second one to provide redundant transmission service from Hailey to
11 Ketchum. Idaho Power identified a route for a redundant transmission line, a portion of which would be
12 undergrounded, and applied for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Idaho
13 Public Utilities Commission, which IPUC approved.
14

15 Idaho Power's original proposal (Option 1) was to add redundant transition power lines by replacing
16 existing distribution poles with taller poles with added transmission lines and other communication lines,
17 along the existing route, which could be modified as advisable. The estimated \$30 million cost of the
18 mostly aboveground project as proposed would be borne by Idaho Power, and not affect Blaine County
19 residents.
20

21 Idaho Power said Blaine County has the option of requesting underground lines to reduce visual impact
22 if the County can pay the additional cost of undergrounding, estimated at \$33-34.5 million from Wood
23 River Substation to Elkhorn Road. IPCo Delivery Planning Manager Dave Angell said it cost more to
24 maintain underground lines, but Idaho Power would incur that cost.
25

26 The BCC considered the option of paying \$7.5 million to underground the existing distribution lines and
27 hanging the transmission lines on the existing distribution poles, which are shorter and might not
28 intrude into the mountain skyline. New transmission poles would typically be corten steel that would rust
29 and be more aesthetic, and can be spaced wider apart, but are taller. Undergrounding mitigates
30 aesthetic impact, and would protect wires from ice loading and wind, etc. Angell explained the
31 differences and benefits between undergrounding transmission lines and distribution lines. Idaho Power
32 has, to date, not undergrounded transmission lines, so the proposed undergrounding of lines into
33 Ketchum would be the first.
34

35 Bergin said conduit was buried alongside the highway reconstruction area north of East Fork Road into
36 Ketchum, and could be used to underground distribution wires.
37

38 P&Z Commissioner Pat Murphy said existing lines over Ohio Gulch and into East Fork and over Power
39 Ranch have not experienced weather or maintenance problems. The new lines from King Hill
40 Substation have caused access problems, but using existing lines would solve all problems of visual
41 impact.
42

43 Angell reviewed the existing single distribution route, explaining whether existing lines are underground
44 or above ground; the height and number of proposed poles; and cost of equipment. Some right-of-way
45 deeds are fee simple to Idaho Transportation Department and some are easements granted by private
46 owners for different purposes, including the sheep trail.
47

48 Options to consider, depending on funding options, and questions for Idaho Power to research:

- 49 • Bury the distribution lines, which would help alleviate visual impact of transmission poles and allow
50 reduced pole height. Distribution lines in most subdivisions along the current distribution line route
51 are already undergrounded.
- 52 • How many transition structures (underground to above ground), which are large, obtrusive and
53 expensive, would be needed to transition from subdivisions where distribution lines are
54 underground to aboveground poles? Idaho Power showed photos of the several kinds of transition
55 structures.
- 56 • Local Improvement District (LID) process is a challenge, but public hearings indicated public

1 support to consider the cost of burying lines. Benefits are aesthetic and reliability for local residents
2 and visitors. Would landowners who live in the segment where the line would be undergrounded
3 pay for the undergrounding, or would the entire service area that benefits from the aesthetics be
4 billed for the undergrounding?

- 5 • Project funding options, including franchise fee, surcharge and a bond.
- 6 • Can Cox communication lines be put underground?
- 7 • Highway 75 right-of-way deeds and easements.
- 8 • Move Segment 3 (Buttercup Road - Valley Club area) easterly to remove it from the visual corridor,
9 but residents there will likely object.
- 10 • Move power lines in Segment 4 (Timber Gulch – Golden Eagle) to the east, within the highway
11 right-of-way (the bikepath is there) and then north of East Fork Road, to the west as far as possible.
- 12 • Requested renderings and project costs of highway crossing options, including rendering of East
13 Fork Road area, including visual impact of transmission power lines crossing the road overhead
14 where distribution lines currently cross; crossing overhead with East Fork traffic light; underground
15 through bike tunnel and transition structures below grade on both sides of the highway, possibly by
16 using multiple lower transition structures; or crossing somewhere else along Highway 75.
- 17 • Segment 5 – Northridge – Silver Sage area – setbacks were 150ft when approved, so eminent
18 domain may be necessary.
- 19 • Reduced impact of electromagnetic field if number of lines is increased.
- 20 • Details of cost of undergrounding transmission lines from Elkhorn Road into Ketchum for
21 comparison purposes of cost of undergrounding distribution lines in rural Blaine County. General
22 consensus is that it would be worthwhile to underground south of Hospital Drive to reduce visual
23 impact in that area, but this is not top funding priority.
- 24 • Can distribution line poles 174-175 where the lines cross the river be spaced farther apart?
- 25 • How close power poles and trees are to the bikepath. Depending on where the power poles are
26 placed, about 30 to 60 trees will be removed from the bikepath from Hospital Drive to Elkhorn Road.
27 Commissioners McCleary and Greenberg would prefer to not have power lines over the bikepath,
28 even if more trees must be cut down.
- 29 • Idaho Power said infrastructure is in place for undergrounding at Pole 172, and it might be possible
30 to underground wires from there to Pole 175. Trees in the area would camouflage the transition
31 structure. Savings for reduced poles if power lines are undergrounded south of the hospital.
32

33 Blaine County Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Tim Graves said the BCC needed to know options for
34 undergrounding, so it could make a decision regarding funding, boundaries, LID potential, franchise
35 fee, etc., which he suspected might delay the process at the P&Z level. P&Z Commissioner Dick
36 Fosbury thought the process could move ahead in parallel, presuming burial of the distribution lines.
37 P&Z can review a modified plan with reduced pole height, fewer lines, and develop Conditions of
38 Approval. P&Z Commissioner Pat Murphy asked Land Use staff to guide P&Z and the BCC in the most
39 efficient way to move forward.
40

41 Idaho Power will determine what Blaine County wants, and provide the County with a detailed
42 comprehensive estimate. Once accepted, the cost is contractually set. Angell suggested the County
43 include local jurisdictions in their consideration. Commissioner Schoen said no assumptions should be
44 made coming out of this meeting about how this project will be funded.
45

46 **ADJOURN**

47 **At the hour of 5:22 p.m., with no more business before them, the County Commissioners**
48 **adjourned.**

49
50
51
52 Attest: _____ Approved _____
53 JoLynn Drage Angenie McCleary
4 County Clerk Chairman