

PUD Update

August 10, 2020

2:50 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, County Manager Erik Martin, Becky Butler, PUD Manager Chris Roden, PUD Public Affairs Manager Willie Painter, PUD IS and Telecommunications Director Jeff Baine

Guests: Dr. Lindsey Pollock, Larry McGee, Celene Fitzgerald of The Chronicle, Frank Corbin

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Willie Painter provided an overview of a Public Works Board (PWB) proposal for broadband. He said it would help provide broadband in unserved areas. He said Lewis County has been identified as a severely depressed area and therefore is eligible for up to \$5,000,000, with a match requirement of 10 percent.

He said the first \$3 million would allow the PUD to lay the groundwork for services and that a service provider would provide the connections using the PUD's fibre optic lines.

Willie said the grants likely will be awarded in November 2020. He said Lewis County's proposed project would be a three-year build.

Jeff Baine said service providers could be ready to provide service within three years.

Chris Roden said Lewis County PUD hopes to be able to help 800 to 1,000 customers with the step.

Chris said the group is looking to provide immediate access to schools, hospitals, governments, etc.

Willie said the PUD would like a letter of support from the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners.

Willie discussed the need to avoid duplicating services, noting that a recent Breeze proposal includes one area that would overlap with the PUD's proposed coverage area. However, he and Commissioner Fund noted, the Breeze proposal would be implemented nearly immediately whereas the PUD's project is a three-year build.

The group discussed wifi hotspots and the bandwidths available.

The commissioners said they would like to share via Facebook details about a statewide broadband survey.

Willie said the PUD is switching to monthly billing.

Meeting adjourned at 3:38 p.m.