

**Town of Bayfield  
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes  
June 8, 2021  
1199 Bayfield Parkway, Bayfield, Colorado**

## I. Opening Ceremony

The June 8, 2021, Bayfield Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chairperson Tish Nelson at 6:30 p.m.

**Planning Commissioners Present:** Dawn Engler, Bryan Gadd, Tish Nelson, Chris O’Shea Heydinger, Ashleigh Tarkington, Kelly Polites

**Planning Commissioners Absent:**  
Six present

**Staff Present:** Kathleen Sickles, Town Manager; Nancy Dosedall, S.E.H., Inc., Town Planner; Rachel Davenport, Administrative Assistant

**Media Present:** None

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**General Public Input:** None

**Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:** None

## II. Action Agenda

### a. Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Nelson opened the action agenda and asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the June 8, 2021, meeting. Mayor Tarkington moved to approve the agenda with the additions of Sections C and D for define the public hearing. Trustee Polites seconded. All in favor.

### b. Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Nelson asked the Commission for questions or approval of the minutes from the May 11, 2021, meeting. Vice Chairperson O’Shea Heydinger moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mayor Tarkington seconded. All in favor.

## III. Public Hearing (continued from February 11, 2020) Use by Review La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) Bayfield to Ponderosa Transmission Line Rebuild

Ms. Dosedall introduced the LPEA proposal for the Bayfield to Ponderosa Transmission Line Rebuild that passes through Town north of Hwy 160. The Bayfield section is only a portion of the upgrade that increases capacity to Pagosa Springs. The upgrade will include new taller poles but not impact any additional properties.

Ms. Dosedall noted that the use by review for the project is complicated as the line crosses several different zoning districts some of which require a use by review. She further noted that Town code does not allow for denial of the project, so the Commission will have to look carefully at mitigation of impacts to residents and businesses.

Chairperson Nelson invited LPEA to present the details of the project.

Jerry Sutherlin, title of LPEA, provided a slide presentation with details about the preferred transmission line path and alternate routes explored per request of the Planning Commission from February of 2020.

- Original line built 1952 was 40 kilovolt (kV) capacity; updated in 1974 to 69 kV capacity.
- New lines will carry 115 kV and will require taller poles.
- The current transmission size will not safely transmit the amount of power needed, and Pagosa Springs is currently in danger of prolonged shutdown as there is no redundancy in transmission lines.
- The project is expected to be finished in five years.

As follow up to the February 2020 meeting in which LPEA agreed to provide alternatives to the proposed line path, LPEA explored two additional options.

- Using current line path is least costly to use for upgrade with the least amount of impacts to customers.
- Following the Tri-State Generation route south of Town limits will cost approximately \$1 million more to build, not including wetlands mitigation or securing of easements. This route would also have higher risk of power interruption if the lines were damaged.
- An underground route would cost \$3.5 million more to build and would require extensive earthwork, i.e., trenching and digging, trees could not be planted close to lines, and underground vaults will have to be installed for maintenance. Additionally, future upgrades are not possible.

Mr. Sutherlin stated the project is a necessity for the LPEA system as a whole. In keeping with LPEA's mission, the work should be done at lowest reasonable cost to provide safe reliable electricity.

Chairperson Nelson asked Mr. Sutherlin to clarify the idea of redundancy.

Mr. Sutherlin replied that if two lines are close together, any damage to one line would likely happen to both. If the lines are separated, the system has a secondary, or redundant, path to reroute services if needed.

Commissioners asked several additional questions of LPEA about the proposed plan to rebuild the line on the existing path through Town.

- Location of internet fiber on the poles (Gadd)
- Tree removal, maintenance and replacement (Nelson)
- Rights-of-way details and changes (Gadd, O'Shea Heydinger)
- Landscaping plan per Town code (O'Shea Heydinger)
- Size and color of new poles (O'Shea Heydinger)

Commissioner Nelson then opened the floor for members of the public to ask questions and provide comment.

Members of the public in attendance posed questions for LPEA, requesting details on several issues:

- Considerations for working with property owners adjacent to Town
- Specifics of new rights of way, including heights and widths, as several residential properties are in the path of the lines
- Effect on property values
- Health and safety information for residential areas
- Responsible parties for maintaining rights of way and regulatory enforcement within rights of way
- More options for changing the route of the transmission lines that were not proposed in the presentation

LPEA representatives attempted to answer some of the questions from the public. LPEA stated that many of the questions raised would have to be answered on a case by case basis and could not be satisfied with a general response.

Hillary Knox, Vice President of Member Experience for LPEA stated that LPEA is understanding of how emotionally charged the issues for the project are. She stated that LPEA did extensive research to present the three

options that have any viability for the project. She empathized that it is unfortunate that a small group of people must bear brunt of infrastructure changes.

Ms. Knox responded to a question of why LPEA had not reached out to the property owners directly affected in the last year that they had come back to restart the conversation. The primary concern from the last meeting was that no options had been offered, so LPEA representative returned with more data to show the current route is best option, and the next step forward is specific negotiations with members who are directly impacted.

Chairperson Nelson asked Ms. Dossdall if she had other comments for the Commissioners regarding the project.

Ms. Dossdall stated that she felt LPEA had put the Commissioners in difficult position as Town Code states that the Commission should not approve a project if it is detrimental to residents. She stated the details of how LPEA will address the Town's regulations are not yet clear and the Commission has heard some contradicting information from LPEA today. She reminded the Commission that Town cannot limit or deny the upgrades per Town code, but felt LPEA could have had discussions with affected residents before the meeting to better understand concerns and the scope of the project's details.

Commissioner Gadd stated that he was at the February 2020 meeting and was disappointed that LPEA did not reach out to the residents. He stated that underground lines would not be an option from a cost standpoint and felt that LPEA did not address concerns from the earlier meeting.

Chairperson Nelson asked staff if the Commission has an option to request LPEA reach out to residents directly and then come back to the Commission for decision.

Mr. Sutherlin stated LPEA can look into more options and apologized that the new staff did not have the answers that residents were looking for. He stated that LPEA was looking at the project from a cost standpoint. He stated that LPEA needs to know which route will be chosen before it can proceed with negotiations for right-of-way easements.

Chairperson Nelson countered that residents need more information about effects to properties, which will help everyone know that all alternatives were explored.

Commissioner Gadd noted he would like to see what the actual cost impact is to members for each project.

Vice Chairperson O'Shea Heydinger stated she was frustrated with LPEA's amount of preparation for the members impacted. Planning Commission's responsibility is to the health and safety of the Town's current and future residents. She stated LPEA should be looking forward to future growth and how it will affect future properties and members.

VP Knox asked for a recap of the issues raised during the public hearing in the interest of not repeating past mistakes.

- Exact placement of power poles
- Identify specific trees impacted in right of way
- Exact electromagnetic frequency measurements and scientific proof of health and safety
- Right of way and easement details
- Cost distribution of the projects to members
- Detail of future impacts on properties in the path of the line
- Detail of the soundness of line currently in place
- Impacts to property values

Mayor Tarkington moved to close the public hearing. Vice Chairperson O'Shea Heydinger seconded. All in favor.

Chairperson Nelson reopened the action agenda.

#### IV. Action Agenda

a. (Continued from February 11, 2020) Use by Review La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) Bayfield to Ponderosa Transmission Line Rebuild

Manager Sickles requested that LPEA provide more information for Bayfield's residents. The transmission lines are an important part of the system to transmit power, but Bayfield's needs should not be secondary to Pagosa Springs', and LPEA needs to talk to the impacted Bayfield residents. She stated she felt LPEA could have taken more responsibility for providing information, and even the PowerPoint presentation would have been more informative than what was provided to the Town before this meeting.

Manager Sickles advised the Commissioners they did not have to take action today if they were not ready or could make a conditional approval as recommended by Ms. Dossall.

Mayor Tarkington stated she did not feel they had enough information for the community to make a decision at this time. She recommended the discussion be tabled for a future meeting.

Chairperson Nelson asked the Commissioners for more comments or a motion.

Mayor Tarkington moved to continue the discussion. Trustee Polites seconded. All in favor.

Manager Sickles stated the next meeting of the Planning Commission will be July 13, 2021.

Chairperson Nelson asked VP Knox if that would be enough time to prepare.

Ms. Dossall reminded the Commission and LPEA that the reschedule would needed to be held within five weeks or LPEA would have to send a new notice of public hearing.

VP Knox stated they would need more time to prepare, and it would not be a problem to re-notice.

#### V. Discussion Agenda

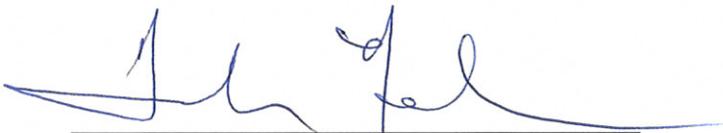
a. Staff Updates

Manager Sickles stated that two spots are still open on Planning Commission and interested residents are needed to volunteer.

b. Adjournment

Mayor Tarkington moved to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Polites seconded. Chairperson Nelson adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

**Approved:**



Tish Nelson, Chairperson

**Attest:**



Rachel Davenport, Administrative Assistant