

PUD Commissioners Opt for Smaller Rate Increase



Improving financial conditions and a colder winter have allowed the Grays Harbor PUD to implement a smaller than expected rate increase in 2019. The PUD Commissioners have voted to adopt a 2.25% increase in customer rates, effective May 1. The commissioners had originally set a 2.5% increase, effective April 1 when they passed the 2019 budget last November.

"Not only were we able to delay the increase by one month, but for the second straight year, we were able to approve a smaller increase than we had budgeted for," said Commission President Russ Skolrood. "Waiting until the spring avoids increasing rates during cold weather, high energy usage months and it allows the utility time to assess its financial state and have a better idea of what size the increase needs to be."

Under the new rate schedule an average customer bill of 1200-kilowatt hours per month, will see an increase of \$2.67. The commissioners pointed to rising power costs of over a half-million dollars and a projected rate increase by the Bonneville Power Administration of 2.9% in the fall as the main reason for the increase.

"We know that when rates go up, it has a big impact on our customers," said Skolrood. "Times are hard and every dollar counts. That is why our staff has worked to contain and control internal costs and we have worked with our partners at Bonneville, and in Olympia and Washington DC to keep power costs as low as they can practically be."

Commission Meeting Dates

Meetings are held in the Nichols Building, 220 Myrtle Street, Hoquiam.

May 2019

Monday - May 6

Monday - May 20

June 2019

Monday - June 3

Monday - June 17

Regular business meetings are scheduled to begin at 4:30 pm. A one hour workshop (3:30 to 4:30 pm) will precede each business meeting, unless otherwise noted. The public is welcome to attend all commission meetings, special meetings, workshops and public hearings. **Public comment periods are included at the open and close of every meeting.**

Commission meetings may be cancelled and special meetings may be scheduled. Please visit our website (www.ghpud.org) for updated information.

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Who Pays for Economic Development?

by Commissioner Russ Skolrood

The PUD's role in economic development is often debated, even at the Commission meetings. What role should the PUD play in economic development for Grays Harbor? Do we give businesses a better price for power? Do we charge them the actual cost for services or do we give them some type of break?

We have over 40,000 customers in the Grays Harbor area. My simple idea is that our role at the PUD is to make sure that no section of the population of ratepayers pays for another when it comes to services and power. With this said, we use data (not my favorite word) to drive our decisions on rates and services. We do what are called "cost of service studies" which come from an independent consultant that will analyze what it truly costs for the services and rates so that we can develop a balanced budget. The key point in that statement is that we only have to have a balanced budget - we do not do it to make a profit because we are a not for profit public power entity. In the past, some economic development decisions were made through political pressure and in the end, the ratepayers were the ones that bore the costs of those decisions. Some decisions made at the State and Federal level have been out of our control, such as I-937, the cost of fish recovery and residential exchange. Each of those decisions have cost our ratepayers and even though we work to voice our concerns and fight the powers that make those decisions, we sadly have to pass those costs onto our ratepayers.

While it would be great to give a business breaks and incentives to move to the Harbor, it is impossible to justify a customer on social security subsidizing a large company with a limited income.

Our goal at the PUD is to supply safe, reliable power and services at the lowest practical cost. When a company comes to the Harbor we want to work with them to help them get the services that they need to be successful. We will strive to find a way to help them any way possible but we cannot allow the thousands of other customers we have to subsidize them. If you believe this is the wrong approach, please come to a meeting and let me know or feel free to call me.



Fiber in the Air for East County Project

Grays Harbor PUD telecom and line crews have worked together to hang over 30,000 feet of utility fiber cable running from Elma to the Schouweiller Road, a crucial step toward the completion of the East County Fiber Project. When completed, the line will provide the backbone of a state funded stretch of telecommunications line that will improve fiber optic cable connections to the Elma and Satsop School Districts, the Schouweiller industrial park and local homes and businesses.

The project was funded by \$463,000 of the state's 2017-19 Capital Budget, approved by the state legislature in January of last year. In addition to the East County project, legislators have been debating and fine tuning other legislation intended to expand and improve internet services in rural Washington.



ENERGY, an informational newsletter, is published monthly for families and businesses energized by Grays Harbor PUD.

2720 Sumner Avenue
Aberdeen WA 98520

Customer Service 360-532-4220
Toll Free 800-562-7726
Fax 360-532-6085

Outage Numbers 360-537-3721
Toll Free 888-541-5923

Visit us at: www.ghpud.org

General Manager: Dave Ward
Editor: Ian Cope

Commissioners:

Arie Callaghan • 360-538-6514 • acallaghan@ghpud.org
Russ Skolrood • 360-538-6289 • rskolrood@ghpud.org
Dave Timmons • 360-538-6267 • dtimmons@ghpud.org

