PUD Board Invests in ‘Service and System’ in 2020 Budget

The Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners concluded the 2020 budget process on November 18, unanimously approving a $127-million budget for the coming year that maintains utility services, while investing in the energy and system that makes those services possible. Over 70% of the 2020 spending plan will go to power purchases with a further $10-million being spent of capital projects to renew and replace utility infrastructure.

“It comes down to the service and the system that keeps the lights on for our customers. This budget invests in the energy, staff and infrastructure our customers rely on to provide them with high value utility services,” said Board President Russ Skolrood. “This is a responsible budget for the utility and the customers it serves.”

Of the $10-million capital budget, $4.2 million will be spent on the utility distribution system, just over $2-million each on the utility general plant and transmission system and $1.6-million on the PUD’s substations.

PUD customers may see a 2% increase in utility rates, beginning in May of 2020. With 72% of utility costs tied to power purchases, the increase will cover the rising costs for those purchases, but will not be implemented until after the cooler winter temperatures have passed and the 2020 financial realities are clearer.
Grays Harbor PUD

Capital Budget Drives a Reliable System
by Arie Callaghan, District One

At our most recent commission meeting, the 2020 budget was approved! Within that budget there are capital projects including planned pole change outs and system upgrades, as well as some telecom extensions. The staff did a good job prioritizing the system needs to keep up the safety and reliability our customers expect. We have tried to use a hold the line mentality and tried to control costs, but there is a fine line. Running to failure is not an option. Preventive maintenance is the best policy and that’s what this budget achieves.

There are a couple of big ticket items that make up a large portion of what was approved, the first being replacement of two line trucks. This equipment doesn’t always get a lot of mileage, but the work hours and stress of lifting and pulling take a toll over the life of these vehicles. Also the corrosive salt spray applied on the highways during winter months has made it impossible to reuse and refit the service bodies on a newer chassis therefore replacing the whole vehicle becomes the only viable option. Again the safety of our crew in the field is absolutely the most important consideration, and we will never take a short cut when it comes to their safety.

The second big budget item is a full on inspection of the over 200 foot tall transmission towers that hold the high voltage line across the Chehalis river. This line runs through the backside of Junction City and crosses the river into the mill area of Cosmopolis. These towers were built in 1932 and there are serious concerns over what condition they are in, so we have retained the service of an engineering firm to assess the structural integrity and carry out a systematic analysis which enables us to make an informed decision moving forward. Again this is not an asset that can be operated to failure. It’s important to do our due diligence and not risk having a catastrophic event later, this was the consensus of staff and the commissioners. These are a few examples of where the capital investments in the utility operations will be made. They are investments designed to improve the service your utility provides to you - our customers. It’s all part of our mission to provide high value utility services at the lowest practical cost; a mission we are honored to carry out. Happy Holidays.

PUD Continues the Foodball Tradition

A win for Hoquiam High School and Grays Harbor food banks. Hoquiam edged Aberdeen by less than 4000 pounds of food donations to win Foodball 2019. Students from the two high schools gathered at the PUD offices on November 12 to weigh in final food donations, tally the final cash totals and celebrate combining to gather over 1.7-million pounds of food for area food banks – donations badly needed and much appreciated during the holiday season.

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