

County Commission Update: Seeking Solutions to the RMP Project

Our efforts to oppose a small section of Rocky Mountain Power's transmission line project in Tooele County have resulted in some positive headway. We'd like to bring you up to date on this far-reaching issue.

First of all, everyone knows we use and need electric power in Tooele County. Long gone are the days when electricity was a convenience; it's now an expected basic need in society. As Tooele County's Commissioners, we don't object to additional electrical infrastructure being built in the county. We benefit from electrical power. We want and need new economic development and that requires more electricity.

However, we have been and remain opposed to the South Bench route of Rocky Mountain Power's (RMP) proposed transmission line route through Tooele County. It's important to note that the South Bench route is only a small percentage of the total RMP project.

After all other attempts at talks and negotiations with RMP have failed we have been forced to take legal action. We have appealed the State Facility Review Board's decision which ordered the county to issue a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to RMP. That appeal is still pending before the Utah Court of Appeals.

The day before the county would have been required to issue the CUP to RMP, in compliance with the Facility Review Board order, Tooele City sued Tooele County in Third District Court, seeking injunctiverelief. Rather than being a hostile action, the injunction was intended to prohibit the county from issuing the CUP. We are pleased that the District Court recognized the importance of the issues raised by Tooele City and Tooele County by granting the requested injunction.

Tooele City's lawsuit highlights the gap between the CUP process and the Facility Review process. That is one of the many issues we are raising with our appeal. Most recently the Third District Court denied RMP's motion to dismiss Tooele City's lawsuit against Tooele County.

We remain optimistic that a settlement can be reached with RMP that would address our concerns with the South Bench route. A huge cooperative effort exists between all affected local governments, specifically Tooele County, Tooele City and Grantsville City, and concerned citizens groups from both cities with the common goal of changing RMP's proposed route along the South Bench.

These groups are not just complaining for the sake of complaining. They have valid concerns and have offered legitimate suggestions that RMP summarily rejected. As a Commission we

have spent countless hours considering and drafting alternate routes, all of which were rejected by RMP.

Numerous negative impacts have been identified. We want to emphasize that we believe the proposed South Bench route of the RMP project is detrimental to public health, to the water shed, and to the view shed. As the Third District Court Judge found in issuing the restraining order prohibiting our issuing the CUP, the Facility Review Board failed to consider the environmental issues and other impacts along the proposed route.

Everyone needs to remember that it is RMP that has insisted on moving forward with the South Bench route. RMP is the applicant for the CUP and it is incumbent upon RMP to revise its application.

As commissioners we have been involved with this issue from the beginning. We have participated in numerous discussions about this project and have attended the public meetings and Planning and Zoning meetings when this project was considered. What you may not know is that not only have we had discussions with RMP officials, but we have had a special meeting with the President of RMP. We have also met with the state director of the Bureau of Land Management (the agency responsible for the Environmental Impact Statement regarding the RMP project).

We have pursued efforts on all levels, which have been necessary and effective in bringing the issue to its current situation. We will continue to work on this issue on all fronts. We strongly believe that a solution can be found that will satisfy all parties.