

MEA JUSTINE PARKS SUBSTATION SUMMARY

Chugiak Community Council

Zoom Meeting

October 15, 2020 7:00pm to approx. 9:00pm



ATTENDEES:

MEA:

- Julie Estey, Senior Director of External Affairs & Strategic Initiatives
- Jon Sinclair, PE, Director of Engineering
- Haileigh Seil, Site Engineer/Project Manager

R&M Consultants, Inc.

- Van Le, AICP, Land Use Permitting

HANDOUTS:

- MEA Justine Parks Handout 10.12.2020 – includes a design comparison, landscape plan and rendering, site plan, East and North elevations, noise analysis, MEA's Response to Resolution letter 0001, and alternative location property impacts.

SUMMARY:

Julie Estey began the presentation to the Council with an overview of the June 1st, 2020 Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) hearing. At the PZC hearing, the Commission expressed MEA's original ring bus design met eight out of the nine conditions. The Commission found MEA's original design was too large and did not meet the character of the neighborhood and recommended MEA to work with the surrounding property owners and the Community Council's to find a solution that works for this area.

A design comparison visual was shared on screen to illustrate the changes between the original design, presented at the June 1st PZC hearing, and the redesign that incorporated the Commission and Birchwood community comments. The redesign is approximately 70% smaller than the original design and only twice the size of the existing energized Justine Parks Substation. Electrically, the redesign will stay the same as the existing substation, other than an increase in the transformer capacity. The redesign includes a single breaker tap off the Eklutna transmission line. The redesign does not include the improvements associated with the reliability of the transmission system that the original ring bus design would have provided. MEA feels this is a fair trade-off to address the community and PZC concerns. With the changes made in the redesign, it is essentially a critical-replacement project instead of an upgrade project.

Julie Estey address the alternative location the neighbor's identified in their resolution letter to relocate the Justine Parks Substation to. This alternative location was initially researched by MEA back in 2015 as part of the Justine Parks Relocation Feasibility Report. In order to relocate this substation, distribution lines for 3 existing feeders and 1 planned future feeder would have to be connected back into the existing infrastructure. Three routing options were identified in the 2015 Relocation Feasibility Report and visuals were shared on screen to show how many property owners would be impacted by relocating the Justine Parks Substation. MEA found there was significantly more impact to the community and our members than keeping the substation at its current location.

Van Le provided an overview of the PZC ruling at the June 1st hearing and expanded on how the substation redesign meets and exceeds Municipality of Anchorage's permitting requirements. If MEA wants to expand the substation again in the future, they will have to apply for another Conditional Use Permit. The current Conditional Use Permit MEA is obtaining will only cover what is included in replacement redesign project.

DISCUSSION (QUESTION/ANSWER):

1. What is the noise level of the current Justine Parks transformer and what will the noise level be with the upgraded transformer?

Back in March, Haileigh went out and measured the noise level of the current transformer. At approximately 170 feet away, standing along Steffes Street, the noise level was measured at 42.9 dBA. The redesign calls for upgrading the transformer from a 10 MVA to a 20 MVA. The noise analysis for the 20 MVA transformer, at maximum loads, calculated the highest noise level to occur at the West property boundary at 56.5 dBA; the West property boundary is 88 feet away from the transformer.

2. Did the noise analysis take the fence or other barriers into consideration?

No. The noise analysis did not take the 12-foot Trex interlocking paneled fence into consideration. The fence is anticipated to reduce the noise levels at the property boundary lines.

3. The redesign will have more capacity but will not have the added redundancy that the original ring bus design would have provided. Is this a correct statement?

Yes. This is a correct statement. The redesign includes upgrading the transformer, which will increase the capacity, but keeps the substation as a single breaker tap off the Eklutna transmission line.

4. What is the additional tall structure [at the Southeast corner] needed for?

There are two 60-foot structures, outside of the substation fence. The redesign incorporates using existing foundations that are already installed along the Eklutna transmission line. This configuration, between the transmission line and the substation, accommodates future upgrades.

5. Can that structure [future use] be eliminated from the design?

Yes, technically one of the structures in the southwest corner could be removed, but that option is cost prohibitive.

6. How tall are the trees going to be when initially planted?

Per Title 21, the initial height of trees is required to be 6 feet. However, MEA's landscape design calls for 8-foot tall trees to decrease the visual impacts right after construction.