

Bluff Town Council Work Session

March 27, 2019

Bluff Community Center at 10:00 a.m.

190 N 3rd East

P. O. Box 324

Bluff UT 84512

The third part of the work session started at 11:15 a.m.

Roll Call Mayor Ann K. Leppanen, Luanne Hook, Brant Murray, Jim Sayers

Robert Ogle and Jared Berrett remained for the first half of the discussion but left due to a conflict with scheduling.

As the work session with Jared Berrett and Robert Ogle was wrapping up, David Ure, Director of the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) arrived to talk with the town council. This was a follow-up to the meeting that the town council had on March 20th with Bryan Torgerson, Resource Specialist and also of SITLA. The parcel of land at issue is 1,999 acres on the Bluff Bench which sits within the town of Bluff's boundaries and within the Bears Ears National Monument as designated by former President Obama.

Ure engaged in a lively and highly beneficial discussion with 4 of the town council and audience (Linda Sosa had a conflict with scheduling and had already left the building) as to the proposed lease of land for a solar energy farm. Ure stated that the "lease is in place" but he did not have the name of the lessee with him today and will provide it. The permittee of the grazing rights is Len Patterson (sp) and he, like the town council, was not timely informed of the lease situation. Bottom line: SITLA likes to be a good neighbor and will require the lessee to work with the town of Bluff.

Ure has been told that the parcel is 1/2 in San Juan County boundaries and 1/2 in Bluff's town boundaries; however, the council thinks that underestimates what all is in Bluff. The Bluff Bench is the "gateway" to the 5 national parks and it is what one experiences when entering Bluff. Murray asked SITLA to consider the economic impact to Bluff, San Juan County, and the community at large if the tourism, which this area relies upon, is negatively impacted by such a large, industrial project.

Berrett expressed his concerns as a developer/owner of Bluff Dwellings. He employed an engineering firm when developing in order to build and he is very concerned about changing the demographics of the soil and the change to retention of moisture in the soil if the landscape were scraped. Ure acknowledged that this project would involve "major construction" that would "level out" the land. Concerns were expressed by all of the potential impact of flash floods and the impact downstream as well as the impact to Spring and Cottonwood canyons. Concerns as to Cow and Calf Canyons were similarly discussed. Berrett also talked about the "look" of his facility which was/is "super important" to him.

One issue identified by Ure is that solar requires access to transmission lines and, right now, Ure is unsure as how much groundwork the lessee has done in that area. Hook and Leppanen think that transmitter is owned by Rocky Mountain Power.

Ure has not been successful by "stomping on his neighbors." SITLA can do basically whatever it wants as it is not beholden to Bluff's planning and zoning but Ure assured the council that the lessee will work with Bluff if the lease is actually acted upon.

ACTION: Bluff town council is to send maps of the town's boundaries and Mary Gillam's flood plain map to him.

We also talked about the proposed new school in Bluff and the probability of having fiber optic brought in to Bluff and the southern part of the county. Ure met with the San Juan County Commissioners earlier today and said that it was his impression we would definitely have fiber optic in a year and a half. Hook and Leppanen filled everyone in on the past Saturday's community meeting (March 23, 2019) about the status of fiber optic held in White Mesa with the White Mountain Ute, Jeff Egly, Utah Education and Telehealth Network Associate Director, and Justin Johansen, Engineering Manger for Emery Telcom. Right now, the project is stuck as the entities negotiate with the Ute residents who have land allotments and who are not willing to sign the paper work to allow the project to move forward. Hook and Leppanen reiterated what take away they had which was the project is stalled and that, if enough signatures are not gathered, the project may need to go around White Mesa which would take time, possibly more money, permission of the FCC, or just stop where it is.

Murray talked of the need that Bluff has for the "old" Bluff Elementary School and Leppanen repeated what she heard Saturday from Jeff Egly that he "thought" the building was being torn down.

Adjourned about 12:30 p.m.