



Land Use and Building Department

2280 American Legion Blvd
Mountain Home, ID 83647
Phone: (208) 587-2142 ext. 1255
Fax: (208) 587-2120
www.elmorecounty.org

James Roddin
Director

Dave Abrahamson
Planner I

Andrew Meek
Planner II

Johnny Hernandez
Building Official

Colton Janousek
Building Inspector

Josh Proffit
Building Inspector

Matt Gochmour
Code Enforcement

Sandra Nuner
Permit Technician

Elizabeth Ellmitt
Admin Assistant

Planning and Zoning Commission PUBLIC WORKSHOP STAFF REPORT

Workshop Date: January 22, 2026

Date Report Compiled: January 16, 2026

Agenda Item: Conditional Use Permit with Master Site Plan for Proposed Mayfield Substation and Transmission Lines Project

Applicant: Idaho Power Company

Case Number: CUP-2025-25 with Master Site Plan

County Review Team: Mitra Mehta-Cooper AICP, Contract Planner
Daniel Pauly AICP, Contract Planner
Richard Heisner PE, Contract Electrical Engineer
Angie Michaels PE, Contract County Engineer

Zoning Designation: General Agriculture (AG) and Light Industrial/Manufacturing (M1)

Parcel Numbers: RP01S04E010060 and RP01S04E012405 (Substation Site)

Property Size: 65.62 Acres (Substation Site)

BACKGROUND:

Conditional Use Permit 2025-25 ("CUP") proposes construction of an electric power substation on two parcels within the General Agricultural (AG) Zoning District and the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Overlay in Elmore County. The Project also includes approximately 10 miles of electrical transmission lines in the General Agriculture (AG) Zone District and Light Industrial/Manufacturing (M1) Zoning District.

The Elmore County Zoning and Development Ordinance ("Zoning Ordinance") classifies the proposed substation as an Energy Production Facility. This use requires a Conditional Use Permit with a Master Site Plan in the AG zone in compliance with Table 7-2-26(B) of the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance identifies both the substation and transmission lines as Power Distribution Facilities. These facilities require a Conditional Use Permit in all zones under Section 7-2-176(E)(3).

The substation will occupy much of approximately 66 acres on Parcels RP01S04E010060 and RP01S04E012405 in western Elmore County ("Substation Site"). Beyond the

Substation Site, the Project includes new transmission lines that will connect to the substation and extend approximately 10 miles along acquired easements, supported by about 85 towers. One segment of transmission line runs west and then south, crossing Interstate-84 before entering Ada County and connecting to the existing Pleasant Valley Solar Substation. The other segment will be a double-circuit transmission line that will run northeast, primarily across State lands, connecting with two existing transmission lines (Exhibit 1).

The Applicant has completed the following pre-application actions and discussed the proposed Application during the Pre-application Neighborhood Meeting. These steps satisfy the pre-application requirements outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.

- To initiate the CUP and associated application processes, the Applicant conducted a series Pre-application Meeting with the Director of Land Use and Building Department starting with April 8, 2025, in compliance with Section 7-3-2(A) of the Zoning Ordinance.

As required by Section 7-3-3 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Applicant sent out meeting notifications on May 7, 2025 and held a Pre-application Neighborhood Meeting on May 19, 2025, to discuss the proposal with property owners within a 1-mile radius of the substation site and transmission lines. The Applicant subsequently held two additional Pre-application Neighborhood Meetings on August 4 & 12, 2025.

On June 17, 2025, the Applicant submitted the CUP Application to the Elmore County Land Use and Building Department and paid the required fees in compliance with Section 7-3-2.

The County Review Team—consisting of the Department, Contract Planners Mitra Mehta-Cooper and Daniel Pauly, Electrical Engineer Richard Heiser, and County Engineer Angie Michaels (“Staff”)—reviewed the Application. As part of the review process, the Department met with affected agencies on September 3, 2025, and November 13, 2025, to discuss the proposal.

After completing the initial Staff review, the Review Team determined that the Application also required a Development Mitigation Agreement to mitigate for some of the social, environmental, and fiscal impacts of the proposed use as allowed in Section 7-10-3 (A) of the Zoning Ordinance and requested documentation for construction traffic data. On November 14, 2025, Staff issued a Completeness Determination Memo (“Completeness Memo”), requesting these items along with additional information (Exhibit 6). The Applicant responded to the Completeness Memo and submitted the requested supplemental information on December 1, 2025.

This Public Workshop was advertised in the Mountain Home Newspaper on January 7, 2026 and the Site was posted on January 15, 2026. The workshop aims to discuss the Application review to-date with the Planning and Zoning Commission (“Commission”) and receive their feedback prior to beginning proceeding towards the public hearings for the proposal.

KEY POINTS FOR COMMISSION AWARENESS:

Visual Impact Analysis

A visual impact analysis, including renderings, is needed to evaluate how the proposed substation and transmission lines will appear from key public viewpoints such as Interstate 84 and Baseline Road, as well as assess potential effects on the surrounding viewshed along the easement route. The analysis should address the extent of visual changes, considering topography, existing vegetation, structures, and cumulative visual impacts.

As Idaho Power provides additional information, further visual mitigation measures may be required. These measures could include landscaping, strategic placement of structures, or other design techniques to reduce visual impacts.

Transmission Line Safety Over I-84

The proposed transmission line route will be crossing through I-84, an essential highway for regional and local connectivity. The Applicant has stated “Idaho Power will adhere to NESC standards for the line design, including clearance over highways and interstates. Idaho Power will follow all requirements of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) to obtain the necessary permits for construction.” While Staff understand that Idaho Power will design all components of this Project in accordance with State and Federal regulations, additional details will assist Staff in determining any highway safety measures, coordination, and protocols that may be needed to mitigate impacts for highway travelers on I-84.

Construction Traffic/Activity and Emergency Services

Elmore County, particularly in regard to law enforcement and emergency response, seeks to understand traffic during construction of energy projects. These projects are unique because construction generates a temporary surge in traffic from workers and deliveries of materials and equipment in areas of the County that typically have low demand for services. Once completed, these facilities require minimal on-site staff and generate little traffic.

The increase in traffic during construction creates a temporary surge not only in potential congestion but also in demand for law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS) and thus increase costs for the County. Coordination with emergency response agencies and the Board of County Commissioners is essential to plan for and fund appropriate staffing and equipment during construction periods. Therefore, Staff proposes that Idaho Power be required to enter into a Development Mitigation Agreement with the Board of County Commissioners to ensure they identify service needs associated with the proposed use and contribute their fair share of cost toward these additional services as allowed in Section 7-10-3(A) of the Zoning Ordinance.

As stated in prior sections, Project implementation will also see transmission lines cross over a portion of I-84. Along with the requested additional information for the transmission lines, additional information is needed detailing how traffic would be impacted during the construction of the transmission lines over I-84.

Impacts on Hillsides and Drainage

Idaho Power proposes to create a large flat pad for the Substation Site that is not currently flat. According to the Shannon & Wilson Geotechnical Report, site grading will involve cuts

up to 15 feet and fills of approximately 10 feet. While the draft grading plan lacks consistent contour labeling, existing elevations range from about 3,425 feet above sea level at the northeast corner along Baseline Road to 3,382 feet at the western edge—a difference of 43 feet. The finished substation pad will sit roughly 10 feet above the western edge.

An intermittent stream channel, Sand Hollow Creek, enters the north-central portion of the site at approximately 3,396 feet above sea level and exits on the western edge of the property at about 3,382 feet. Current plans propose piping the creek through the site, which would increase water velocity compared to the natural channel. The pipe outfall is shown reconnecting at a near-right angle, where concentrated flow and velocity could cause erosion. Additional design measures are needed to ensure water reenters the downstream channel at pre-development-like volume and velocity. These measures may include daylighting a portion of the channel on-site with engineered features to slow the flow before reentry.

Given the broader area's topography, particularly north of Interstate 84, some of the approximately 85 transmission towers and their foundation pads are expected to impact hillside areas. As design advances, detailed information on hillside impacts will be required prior to tower construction.

Fire Response Plan for Substation

An adequate fire response plan is a critical component of any proposed electrical substation, given the potential risks associated with high-voltage equipment and the proximity of critical infrastructure and surrounding land uses. A well-developed plan helps ensure quick identification, containment, and suppression of fires, minimizing risks to emergency responders and the public, reducing damage to utility assets, and preventing the spread of fire to adjacent properties or wildland areas.

Elmore County recommends including an agreement between Idaho Power and an appropriate firefighting agency as part of the Project proposal. This agreement should outline roles and responsibilities, communication procedures, training opportunities, and resource availability specific to the substation. Establishing this coordination in advance ensures that local responders are prepared for site-specific hazards and demonstrates Idaho Power's commitment to proactive collaboration with emergency services. This approach enhances public safety and reduces risk throughout the life of the facility.

Development Mitigation Agreement

The Department and local emergency responders strongly believe that the County and Applicant need to formalize and clarify the respective obligations of the parties through construction, operation, maintenance, and enforcement of the use and to mitigate for some of the potential social, fiscal, and environmental impacts of the use on the County's taxpayers as well as natural and built environments. Idaho Code Section 67-6511A and Title 7, Chapter 10 of the Zoning Ordinance guides the creation, form, recording, modification, enforcement, and termination of Development Agreements, which in this instance used to guide mitigation measures for the proposed use in substance and process. This recommendation is made in order formalize and clarify the respective obligations of the Applicant and the County through its life-cycle and to mitigate for some of the potential social, fiscal, and environmental impacts of the proposed use that cannot be mitigated through conditions of approvals.

Preliminary Findings on 11 Conditional Use Permit Criteria (Section 7-9-7)

These findings are preliminary and provided for awareness and coordination. They are subject to revision, potentially substantial revision, prior to the Commission Hearing. No finding should be interpreted as an indication of future approval of the Application.

- 1. The proposed use shall, in fact constitute a Conditional Use as determined in Ordinance Table 7-2-26 (B), Elmore County Land Use Table, as contained in this Ordinance;**

Staff Response:

The Zoning Ordinance classifies the proposed substation as an Energy Production Facility. This use requires a Conditional Use Permit with a Master Site Plan in the AG zone in compliance with Table 7-2-26(B) of the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance identifies both the substation and transmission lines are Power Distribution Facilities. These facilities require a Conditional Use Permit in all zones under Section 7-2-176(E)(3).

- 2. The proposed use shall be in harmony with and in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and this Ordinance;**

Staff Response:

Comprehensive Plan:

The Future Land Use Map (Map #4) in Chapter 5 – Land Use of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan designates the Substation Site as AG and the route of the transmission lines as a combination of AG and M-1. The AG designation applies to agriculture and the M-1 designation applies to light industrial and manufacturing. Infrastructure such as the proposed substation and transmission lines are found across various planned land uses in the County, including the subject land use designations. Such infrastructure supports existing and future uses in the zones while allowing surrounding land to be developed according to the Comprehensive Plan designations.

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan establishes several objectives and considerations regarding power and electrical infrastructure within the County. A primary objective is to enhance the electrical system and its capacity, ensuring adequate energy for economic and community development, and to work with Idaho Power to promote the development of energy services and public facilities to meet public needs.

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes encouraging the use of renewable energy resources and ensuring the multiple-use capability of utility corridors. For long-range planning, the development of electrical infrastructure is detailed in the Eastern Treasure Valley Electrical Plan (ETVEP), last updated in 2024, which provides conceptual locations for future infrastructure. The ETVEP is a conceptual plan and not regulatory. The proposed substation and lines to the northeast are consistent with the conceptual plan. The alignment between the proposed substation and the Pleasant Valley Solar Substation is

not shown in the 2024 plan. Regardless of presence in the ETVEP, any new or upgraded transmission lines and substations still require jurisdictional approval and public siting processes.

Overall, according to Idaho Power, the proposed substation and transmission lines create a critical hub and connections to deliver power more efficiently and reliably to users in the County in support of ensuring adequate energy for economic and community development. The hub function includes supporting the growing renewable wind and solar infrastructure in the County.

Zoning Ordinance:

The applicable portions of the Zoning Ordinance include Title 7, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10; Title 8, Chapter 1; and Title 10, Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8. Discussion of each is included below:

- **Title 7, Chapter 2:** See Findings 1 and 3
 - **Title 7 Chapter 3:** Applicable procedures will be followed.
 - **Title 7 Chapter 5:** Construction of the flat pad for substation infrastructure will involve cut and fill with slopes exceeding 15%, requiring a Hillside Permit for the Substation Site. Idaho Power has not provided information on potential grading related to transmission tower installation. All grading related to transmission towers that impact or creates slopes greater than 15% must undergo County review pursuant to this Chapter.
 - **Title 7 Chapter 6:** Sufficient information on lighting has not yet been submitted but will be required of the Applicant.
 - **Title 7 Chapter 7:** No sign information is included in the submitted material. It is understood the Applicant will apply for and the Department will review all non-exempt signs on the Substation Site for compliance with Chapter 7.
 - **Title 7 Chapter 9:** See Findings 1-11 for compliance with Conditional Use Permit requirements.
 - **Title 7, Chapter 10:** A Development Mitigation Agreement (DA) with the Board of County Commissioners is required and will be finalized in the upcoming months. The DA will address social, economic, and environmental impacts throughout the lifecycle of the development including during construction, operation, and future closure/decommissioning.
 - **Title 8, Chapter 1:** With the Project within the WUI overlay, special attention is being paid to fire prevention and protection as can be seen in Finding 8 and additional related information is requested from the Applicant.
 - **Title 10:** See Master Site Plan findings. No land divisions are proposed. In addition, in regards to Chapter 5, there are no private roads requiring County review.
3. **The proposed use complies with the purpose statement of the applicable base zone of Ordinance Section 7-2-5 and with the specific use standards as set forth in this Chapter;**

Staff Response:

The proposed substation is within the Ag Zoning District. The proposed transmission lines are in the Ag Zoning District north of Interstate 84 and in the M1 Zoning District south of Interstate 84.

The Zoning Ordinance provides the purpose statement for the Ag Zoning District in Section 7-2-5 (A), stating:

The purpose of the Ag district is to preserve and protect the supply of agriculture and grazing land in Elmore County until development is appropriate. This district will also control the infiltration of urban development and other uses into agriculture areas, which will adversely affect agricultural operations. Uses that are compatible with farming, ranching, grazing, forest products, and limited mining may be considered in this district. Residential land use is allowed in the Ag zone subject to site development standards and compatibility with agricultural operations. The "Ag" land use designation is the base zone throughout Elmore County. It contains areas of productive irrigated croplands, grazing lands, forestland, mining lands, public lands as well as rangeland and ground of lesser agricultural value.

The substation has limited impact on surrounding agriculture in terms of traffic or other conflicts. Most agriculture uses can continue within the new transmission line easements. A number of other electric substations and many miles of transmission lines exist across Agriculture land in Elmore County and have not created major conflicts.

The Zoning Ordinance provides the purpose statement for the Light Industrial/Manufacturing (M1) Zone in Section 7-2-5 (F), stating:

The purpose of the M1 district is to provide for commercial and light industrial development and opportunities for employment of Elmore County citizens and area residents and reduce the need to commute to neighboring cities. The M1 district will encourage the development of manufacturing, wholesale, and distribution establishments which are clean, quiet, and free of hazardous or objectionable elements, such as noise, odor, dust, smoke, or glare and that are operated entirely or almost entirely within enclosed structures or fenced yards; to delineate areas best suited for industrial development because of location, topography, existing facilities, and relationship to other land uses. Uses within the M1 district require reasonable access to arterial roadways. Land uses in this category may require a mix of commercial or light industrial uses that consists of clean types of manufacturing, processing, warehousing, repair and general industrial uses.

The transmission lines will not preclude the currently undeveloped M1-zoned area from developing with other uses allowed in the M1 zone.

The following Specific Use Standards are applicable for the proposed use:

Required Findings for Electrical Processing Facilities Per Section 7-2-106:

A. Additional general standards or requirements for this use.

7-2-106 (A)(1) Prior to receiving final approval and zoning approval, the owner or operator of an Energy Production Facility shall show compliance with all applicable

Idaho Public Utility and Federal Agency rules and regulations and shall operate the facility in conformance with those same regulations.

Staff Response:

The Project commits to meeting State and Federal agency requirements, which will continually be reviewed during the review of the CUP.

7-2-106 (A)(2) Facility improvements shall be at least two thousand five hundred (2,500') feet away from any existing residential dwelling at the time of the application for permit. This distance shall be measured from the centerline of the main power production turbine (support equipment, outbuildings, offices, etc. shall be excluded) to the closest edge of the residence.

Staff Response:

Although this standard is applicable to the proposed substation because the substation meets the Ordinance's definition of Energy Production Facility, this standard does not functionally apply because the 2500 feet is measured only from "the main power production turbine" and no turbine is proposed. With no turbine there is no point from which to measure the required distance. Several existing residences are within 2500 feet of the Substation Site boundary including those at: 650 S Prairie Grass Drive, 730 S Prairie Grass Drive, 731 S Prairied Grass Drive, 752 S Prairie Grass Drive, 753 S Prairie Grass Drive, 919 E Baseline Road, and 921 E Baseline Road.

7-2-106 (A)(3) The applicant shall demonstrate and maintain an adequate fire protection and firefighting capacity, including entering into an agreement with a public firefighting agency when the applicant's project is within the jurisdiction of such an agency.

Staff Response:

The proposed substation is not within the jurisdiction of any firefighting agency. The County is working with Idaho Power to have a clear and sufficient fire plan, and efforts will continue as the Project prepares for a public hearing.

7-2-106 (A)(4) Operation of the facility shall not result in any noise louder than 58 decibels on the A-weighted decibel scale as measured from 750 feet from the centerline of the power producing turbine. A higher decibel reading would require a variance unless the Commission grants a noise waiver. The Commission may grant a noise waiver provided the owner(s) of all affected property waive in writing the 58Db noise requirement.

7-2-106 (A)(6) The applicant, with its building permit application, shall submit and therefore follow a landscaping, screening and noise control plan to comply with section 4 above. The plan's ability to comply with section 4 shall be certified by a licensed engineer employed by the applicant. All improvements on the facility shall be enclosed by an appropriate security fence

Staff Response:

There is no power producing turbine from which to measure the noise, therefore this 58Db requirement does not apply.

7-2-106 (A)(5) The Administrator shall cause the applicant to provide information detailing possible adverse impacts and require mitigation of same.

Staff Response:

An additional adverse impact is visual impact, for which the Idaho Power has been requested to submit a viewshed analysis.

7-2-106 (A)(7) Before zoning approval is granted, the applicant shall hold at least two (2) public meetings. Notice of those meetings shall be by publication in local newspaper and by mail to property owners within one (1) mile of the proposed facility.

7-2-106 (A)(8) Public notification shall be increased at the discretion of the Director to accommodate notification for all potential impacts.

Staff Response:

Idaho Power held the required public meetings, and no special notice increase has been deemed necessary by the Director.

4. The proposed use shall comply with all applicable County Ordinances;

Staff Response:

This report includes findings that demonstrate compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed use was discussed with affected agencies on September 3, 2025, and coordination will continue as needed with County departments regarding applicable ordinances. All comments related to County ordinances will be incorporated into Staff's recommendation to the Board.

5. The proposed use shall comply with all applicable State and Federal laws, rules and/or regulations;

Staff Response:

The proposed use was discussed with affected agencies on September 3, 2025, and coordination will continue as needed with State and Federal agencies. Comments and concerns from these agencies will be incorporated into the Staff's recommendation to the board.

6. The proposed use shall be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in such a way as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity; and that such use shall not change the essential character of said area;

Staff Response:

Electrical infrastructure for distribution and storage is found across the County in various zones to support the power needs of the surrounding area and broader region. These facilities are critical to sustaining and enabling growth and development in Elmore County, including planned residential communities and future industrial uses in areas such as the Simco Road corridor. Reliable electrical infrastructure ensures that new development can

occur without constraints on energy availability, which is essential for economic vitality and long-term planning objectives.

While a substation at this location will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area, its visual presence must be carefully considered. A comprehensive visual impact and viewshed analysis is required to evaluate how the substation and associated transmission lines will appear from key public viewpoints, such as Interstate 84 and Baseline Road, and to assess cumulative effects on the surrounding landscape. This analysis should inform mitigation measures—such as landscaping, strategic placement of structures, and other design techniques—to minimize visual impacts and preserve the County’s scenic quality.

7. The proposed use shall not be hazardous or disturbing to existing neighboring uses or impede their normal development;

Staff Response:

Neighboring uses near the substation include rural residential and agricultural uses. Future planned residential communities and industrial areas along the Simco corridor will also need additional power infrastructure. The proposed transmission line corridor will cross several rural residential parcels before extending over agricultural and vacant land.

Construction will significantly increase traffic in the area. The Applicant must provide a clear construction management plan that addresses trip routing to the Substation Site, designates worker parking areas, identifies delivery locations, and traffic mitigation measures. Similar traffic planning will be required for transmission line construction, as needed.

Construction activities, particularly grading, can generate dust. Idaho Power’s contractors must implement dust control and erosion prevention measures—such as water trucks and sediment barriers—to minimize airborne particulates and prevent sediment from entering drainage systems.

Once construction is complete, traffic impacts will be minimal.

Another potential neighbor-disturbing impact identified by the Department is visual impact of both the Substation Site and transmission lines. Idaho Power has been requested to submit a viewshed analysis, which analysis may result in mitigation requirements to reasonably minimize visual impact. Also, noise from substation equipment has a potential to impact neighbors, and Idaho power should provide more information concerning the noise generated and potential impact on neighbors.

8. The proposed use shall be served adequately by available public facilities and services such as highways, streets, police protections, fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water, sewer, or that the person responsible for the establishment of the proposed conditional use shall be able to provide adequately any such services;

Staff Response:

Highways and Streets: While long-term operations of the substation and transmission lines will not generate noticeable traffic, construction will create a temporary surge from contractor vehicles, heavy delivery trucks, and construction equipment. This surge may stress local roads. The contractor must avoid blocking or delaying local traffic. When necessary, flagging should be implemented, and neighbors should receive clear communication regarding temporary closures or delays for deliveries, utility work, or other construction activities.

The proposed transmission lines will cross a portion of I-84. Careful coordination is required to manage traffic impacts during construction over the interstate. Detailed plans showing potential lane closures or detours must be developed and coordinated with ITD and emergency responders.

Police Protection and Emergency Response: Construction-related traffic will temporarily increase demand for law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS), and thus increase costs for the County. Coordination with emergency response agencies and the Board of County Commissioners is essential to plan for and fund appropriate staffing and equipment during construction periods. Idaho Power will be required to enter into a Development Mitigation Agreement with the Board of County Commissioners to ensure they contribute their fair share of cost toward these additional services and otherwise coordinate service needs.

Fire Protection: A comprehensive fire response plan is critical for the proposed electrical substation due to the risks associated with high-voltage equipment and proximity to critical infrastructure and surrounding land uses. This plan should ensure rapid identification, containment, and suppression of fires, minimizing risks to responders and the public, reducing damage to utility assets, and preventing fire spread to adjacent properties or wildland areas.

An agreement between Idaho Power and an appropriate firefighting agency must outline roles, responsibilities, communication procedures, training opportunities, and resource availability specific to the substation. Establishing this coordination in advance, including in the Development Mitigation Agreement with the Board of County Commissioners, ensures local responders are prepared for site-specific hazards and demonstrates Idaho Power's commitment to proactive collaboration with emergency services.

Drainage Structures: As discussed elsewhere in this report, requirements and measures are in place to ensure appropriate drainage for the Substation Site and additional evaluation as designs are finalized for transmission towers.

Refuse Disposal: Idaho Power will be responsible for disposing of refuse generated during construction and during operation of the Substation Site. No concerns regarding refuse disposal have been identified that would affect the Master Site Plan or Project feasibility.

Water and Sewer: Idaho Power intends to establish a domestic well and septic system for the Substation Site after obtaining the appropriate permits. If these permits cannot be secured, the Site has sufficient area to accommodate water delivery and sanitary services that are pumped and removed off-site on a regular basis.

- 9. The proposed use shall not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services and the proposed use shall not be detrimental to the economic welfare of the County;**

Staff Response:

A strong and reliable power grid is essential to the economic vitality of the County and region. However, a large construction project in a relatively remote location introduces significant considerations for public services. The temporary surge of vehicles and activity will create demand for law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS) beyond what is currently planned for the area. Coordination with emergency response agencies and the Board of County Commissioners is essential to plan for and fund appropriate staffing and equipment during construction periods. Idaho Power will be required to enter into a Development Mitigation Agreement with the Board of County Commissioners to ensure they contribute their fair share of cost toward these additional services and otherwise coordinate service needs.

Staff's analysis of environmental impact and whether it is detrimental to the County is limited due to the natural features analysis only covering one of the two Substation Site parcels. An updated natural features analysis is needed, covering the entire Substation Site. In addition, no natural features analysis is provided for future transmission towers and will need to be provided in the future as design and location of towers is finalized.

- 10. The proposed use shall not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment, and conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any persons, property or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odors;**

Staff Response:

No exhaust or air pollution is anticipated. Power transformers do produce noise, but no information indicates the noise would be excessive to the extent of being detrimental to any person or property or the general welfare of the County. No additional smoke, fumes, glare, or odors are anticipated. Vehicle traffic will be minimal, except during construction, when the Applicant will be required to implement a traffic control plan, as needed.

- 11. The proposed use shall not result in the destruction, loss or damage of a natural or scenic feature of major importance.**

Staff Response:

While the proposal is to reroute Sand Hollow Creek, a minor intermittent drainage, it is not of major importance, and the watercourse will continue above and below the Project.

Preliminary Findings on 4 Master Site Plan Criteria (10-6-7(A))

These findings are preliminary and provided for awareness and coordination. They are subject to revision, potentially substantial revision, prior to the Commission Hearing. No finding should be interpreted as an indication of future approval of the Application.

- 1. The Master Site Plan complies with the applicable Comprehensive Plan; and**

Staff Response:

Please refer to Comprehensive Plan finding 2 above.

2. When applicable, the master site plan complies with Section 10-6-4 General Required Standards; in regard to:

A. Location of Structures on the Site; and

Staff Response:

Structures are positioned to ensure security, reduce fire risk, and meet operational requirements. Most standards in this subsection apply to residential development and are not relevant to this Application.

B. Non-Vehicular Access and Internal Circulation;

Staff Response:

Due to the nature of this and similar energy facilities, for safety reasons no public non-vehicular access is permitted to the Substation Site. Any on-site employees or authorized visitors to the Substation Site that arrive in a vehicle and walk the Site will wear safety gear as required and otherwise follow safety protocols. No specific circulation is provided to the transmission line towers, with minimal access established by Idaho Power for maintenance.

C. Automobile Access and Internal Circulation:

Staff Response:

Once operational, vehicle access to the substation will be limited to operations and maintenance staff. No concerns have been identified regarding site access or circulation. Idaho Power will maintain standard access to transmission line towers for routine maintenance and emergency access.

D. Additional Off-street Parking Design Standards.

Staff Response:

Adequate unmarked parking will be provided on gravel, consistent with other power substations in Elmore County. No parking is required for transmission lines.

3. The applicant has submitted a natural features analysis compliant with section 10-6-5 indicating that the proposed development and master site plan sufficiently address:

a. Any natural constraints detected or observed; and

Staff Response:

Staff's review is limited due to the natural features analysis only covering one of the two Substation Site parcels. An updated natural features analysis covering both parcels is needed. In addition, no natural features analysis is provided for future transmission towers and will be needed in the future as design and location of the towers is finalized.

Staff notes, Sand Hollow Creek crosses the northwest corner of the Substation Site, and a small drainage area flows northwest toward the creek. This drainage must be maintained. Idaho Power must provide evidence of coordination with the adjacent property owner to the west regarding drainage. Current plans dated December 1 show Sand Hollow Creek piped through the Substation Site and reconnecting with its natural course at a perpendicular angle. This design could increase water velocity and volume, leading to erosion, higher downstream flows, and greater turbidity. Additional design measures are required to slow water before it reenters the established channel and to align the outflow at an angle that supports preexisting flow conditions.

Construction of the flat pad for substation infrastructure will involve cut and fill with slopes exceeding 15%, requiring a Hillside Permit for the Substation Site. Idaho Power has not provided information on potential impacts from transmission tower installation; however, any impacts to natural drainage or hillsides must undergo County review. While no specific soil concerns have been identified, final geotechnical information will be required and reviewed to ensure stable foundations for all improvements at the Substation Site and along the new transmission line corridors.

b. Historical and Cultural Resources; and

Staff Response:

The Applicant reports that the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office has not identified any historical or cultural resources on the eastern parcel of the Substation Site in the Idaho Cultural Resources Information System or the National Register of Historic Places. However, no information has been provided regarding potential resources on the western parcel of the Substation Site or at the transmission line tower sites.

c. Sensitive Plant and Wildlife Species; and

Staff Response:

No impacts to sensitive vegetation have been identified on the eastern parcel of Substation Site. The Applicant needs to provide the same type of information for the western parcel. In addition, as tower design and placement progress, vegetation impacts must be reviewed to ensure protection of sensitive species, including slickspot peppergrass.

d. Any impacts on Natural Features

Staff Response:

See discussion under a. above regarding impacts on natural drainage and topography.

4. The master site plan complies with section 10-6-6 Other required standards; in regard to:

a. Screening; and

Staff Response:

The Substation Site will have six-foot screening.

b. Drainage; and

Staff Response:

Additional design and detailed planning are required to ensure drainage remains within existing basins and that the natural flow of Sand Hollow Creek continues below the Substation Site. Current plans dated December 1 indicate the creek would be piped through the Substation Site and rejoin its natural course at a perpendicular angle. This design could increase water velocity and volume, leading to erosion, higher downstream flows, and greater turbidity. Future design revisions must include measures to slow water before it reenters the established channel and align the outflow at an angle that supports preexisting flow conditions.

c. Water Supply and Sewage Disposal; and

Staff Response:

Idaho Power has indicated plans to construct an individual well and septic system; however, design details and permitting information have not yet been provided.

d. Filling, Excavation, and Earthmoving; and

Staff Response:

Disturbed areas will be required to be revegetated, and standard erosion control measures will be implemented during construction to ensure sediment does not leave the Substation Site.

e. Irrigation Services and Delivery Systems; and

Staff Response:

The proposal does not involve modifications to existing irrigation canals or ditches. Landscape irrigation is neither planned nor expected to be required.

f. Utilities; and

Staff Response:

The Master Site Plan does not show on-site utilities. It is understood and will be required by condition of approval that all on-site utilities are installed underground consistent with the Zoning Ordinance.

g. Maintenance; and

Staff Response:

While detailed maintenance information is not available at this stage of review, the County will require maintenance to meet the expected standards.

h. Supplemental Information, Modifications (related to existing natural features); and

Staff Response:

The County will work with Idaho Power to maintain the Sand Hollow Creek drainage through the Substation Site and ensure that downstream areas remain unaffected.

i. Alternative Master Site Plan

Staff Response:

The Applicant has not provided a request for Alternate Site Development
4918-4199-0537, v. 2