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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 and Variances for Natural Gas-fired Power Plant and Switching Station

Applicant: Idaho Power Company

Case Number: CUP-2025-32 with Master Site Plan and VAR-2025-03

County Review Team: Mitra Meta-Cooper AICP, Contract Planner
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Zoning Designation: Heavy Industrial/Manufacturing (M2) with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Overlay

Parcel Number: RP01S04E262410

Property Size: Approximately 30 acres of a 160-acre Site

BACKGROUND:

Idaho Power Company requests a Conditional Use Permit with Master Site Plan and two Variances ("the Application") for the proposed Peregrine Energy Center – Natural Gas Power Plant and Switching Station ("the Project").

The Project is located in the Heavy Industrial/Manufacturing (M-2) Zone District with a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Overlay in Elmore County, Idaho within the Simco District of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, which promotes industrial uses within unincorporated Elmore County. The proposed use is classified as an Electrical Generating Facility, which requires a Conditional Use Permit and a Master Site Plan under Table 7-2-26(B) of the Zoning Ordinance for the M-2 Zone District. It also includes components that meet the definition of Energy Production Facility under the Ordinance, which also require a Conditional Use Permit under Table 7-2-26(B). The Application requests a variance to allow the exhaust stacks and inlet filter plenum for the power plant to exceed the maximum height permitted in the M-2 Zone District, as specified in Table 7-2-27(B) of the Zoning Ordinance. The Application also requests a variance to the allowed ambient sound

level at 750 feet of 58 decibels, as specified in Zoning Ordinance Section 7-2-103 (5) to emit loader sound. Because the Project is located within the WUI Overlay, it must also comply with Title 8, Chapter 1 of the Elmore County Zoning and Development Ordinance.

The Project is proposed on an approximately 30 acres of Assessor's Parcel Number RP01S04E262410, which is part of a 160-acre parcel owned by Idaho Power.

As required prior to submitting the Application, the Applicant completed the following pre-application steps:

- April 8, 2025: The Applicant held a Pre-Application Meeting with the Department Director in compliance with Section 7-3-2(A).
- July 22, 2025: The Applicant sent invitations for the Neighborhood Meeting to adjacent property owners but did not obtain the Elmore County generated list of neighbors that needed to be notified of the Neighborhood Meeting. Neighborhood meetings were conducted on August 4 and 12, 2025.

On September 12, 2025, the Applicant submitted the Application to the Department and paid the required fees in compliance with Section 7-3-2.

On November 13, 2025, the Department met with affected agencies to discuss the proposal.

On January 8, 2026, the Applicant held an additional Neighborhood Meeting which highlighted the variance requested while also giving an overall update on the Project.

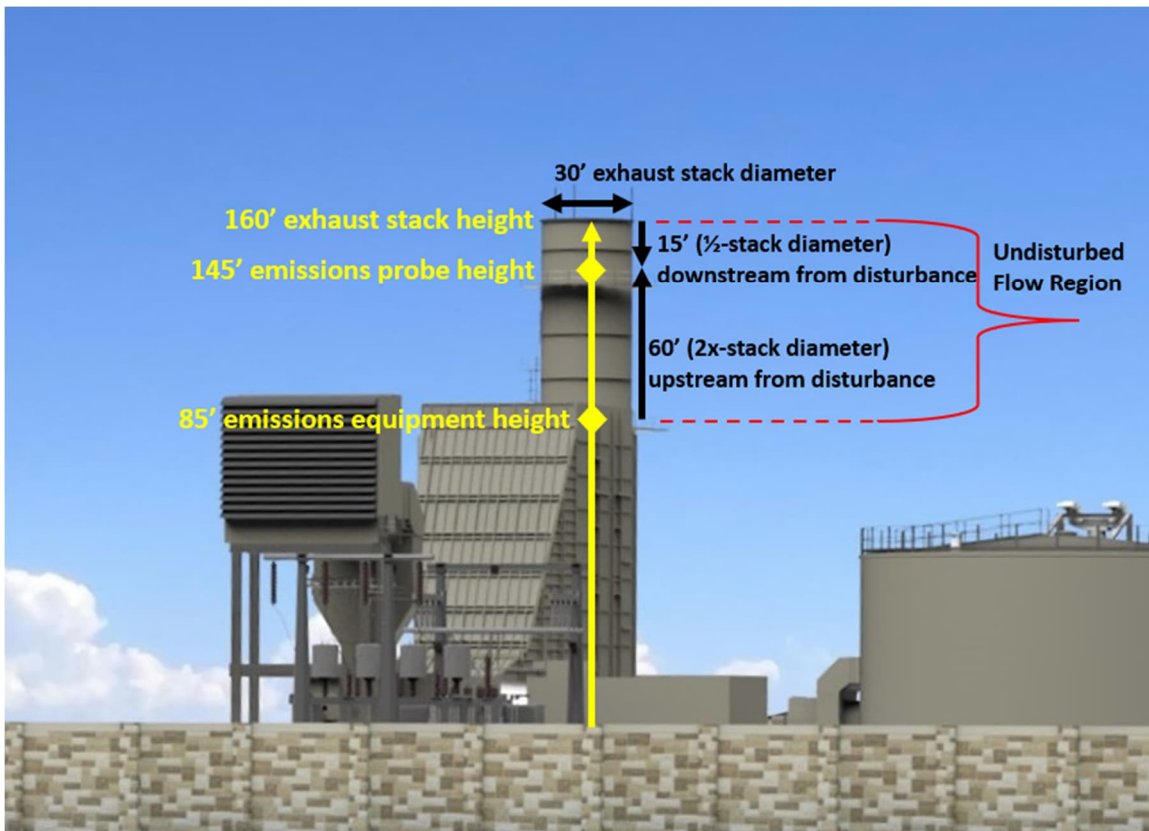
KEY POINTS FOR COMMISSION AWARENESS:

Variance for Exhaust Height

The Elmore Zoning Ordinance for Heavy Industrial (M-2) industrial zone permits structures up to 80 feet in height. However, preliminary design estimates for the power plant indicate that the inlet filter plenum will be approximately 94 feet tall, and the exhaust stacks will reach about 160 feet. Because the height exceeds the Ordinance maximum, the Applicant is requesting a variance.

The height of the exhaust stacks is primarily dictated by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for installing emissions monitoring equipment. According to EPA requirements, the emissions sensor probe must be positioned at a distance equal to twice the exhaust stack's diameter above the emissions equipment. In this case, the emissions equipment is located at 70 feet, with the first probe 60 feet higher and an additional 30 feet for a second probe, resulting in a total stack height of 160 feet. Taller stacks also, according to Idaho Power, improves air dispersion, helping to minimize the impact of emissions on surrounding areas.

Although the proposed structures exceed the current height limit, the power plant is set back approximately 1,000 feet from Simco Road and sits about 30 feet lower than Interstate 84. These factors will significantly reduce the off-site visual impact of the higher structures.

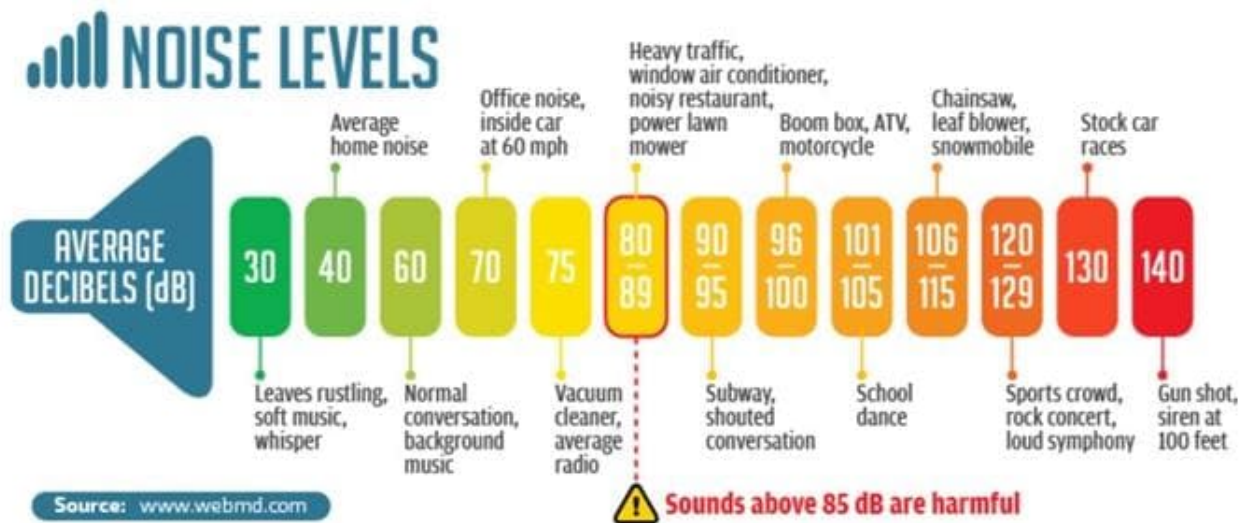


Variance for Sound Level

The power plant anticipates an increase in ambient sound levels due to the operation of transformers, turbines, and other electrical equipment. To mitigate this, Idaho Power plans to implement noise-reduction strategies such as acoustic barriers, vibration isolation, silencers, and sound-absorbing materials.

A preliminary sound study indicates that the facility can be designed to likely meet Elmore Zoning Ordinance Section 7-2-103 (5), which mandates that noise levels from the facility should not exceed 58 decibels on the A-weighted scale when measured from 750 feet from a power-producing turbine. However, the preliminary sound levels are near the maximum level, even with reasonable mitigation efforts. With preliminary readings on the threshold of exceeding the maximum it is possible that, as built, the facility will generate above the maximum. As such, Idaho power is requesting a variance for up to 75 decibels, which they can have confidence in their ability to meet.

As a comparison, according to information Idaho Power provided from webmd.com (see below), the difference between the allowed maximum and the requested variance is that between normal conversation and background music and vacuum cleaner or average radio. Idaho Power also points out that, at the Ordinance-required measurement point, other ambient noise from nearby transportation facilities and industrial operations will mix with the powerplant noise creating minimum impact on surrounding areas. Also, the noise producing portion of the power plant is set well away from any nearby use, including 1,000 feet from Simco Road, the nearest public road.



Fire Protection

Fire protection is a major concern for Elmore County decision-makers, including the Department, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners. The Site lies within a Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI) overlay as defined in the Zoning Ordinance and is not located within a fire district. In a letter dated November 8, 2025, Luke Doiron, Chief Commercial Officer of Rural Metro Fire Department, stated:

“Rural Metro has recently opened a comprehensive Fire Station in Mayfield Springs, Idaho, with an initial coverage area of Mayfield Springs. This state-of-the-art facility represents our commitment to providing exceptional fire and EMS services to this growing community. Once the Fire Station is firmly established with operating history and has achieved certain key milestones in support of the Mayfield Springs neighborhood, it is Rural Metro's intent to serve the nearby residents and businesses with Fire and EMS services. I want to assure you that Simco Environmental is on our high-priority waiting list, and it is our intent to serve Simco as soon as possible.”

On January 9, 2026, the Applicant submitted additional information regarding Fire preparedness and response. Staff will continue to review and coordinate with the Applicant to ensure adequate fire protection is provided.

Construction Traffic/Activity and Emergency Services

Elmore County, particularly regarding 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 very little traffic.

The significant 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 increased 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. 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 is used to guide mitigation measures for the proposed use in substance and process that cannot be mitigated through conditions of approval.

Natural Gas Supply and Safety

The Applicant's narrative describes the location as ideal for the natural gas-fired power plant partially due to the proximity to an existing natural gas line. However, additional information is needed regarding agreement with the gas provider about supplying the high amount of gas needed for operations as well as assurances that construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of the natural gas infrastructure will be done with the upmost safety.

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 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 proposed use is an Electrical Generating Facility and Energy Production Facility under the Ordinance. These uses require a Conditional Use Permit and a Master Site Plan under Table 7-2-26(B) of the Zoning Ordinance for the M-2 Zone District.

- 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 Site as M-2 within the Simco Road District. The M-2 designation applies to heavy manufacturing and processing industries. The Project qualifies as a heavy-industrial type use permitted as a conditional use in the M-2 district. With its exhaust stacks and related operations, the Project aligns with the nature and type of heavy industrial activities anticipated in the M-2 zone and the Simco Road District. Both the zone and Simco District prohibit all residential development, and there are no new residents anticipated in this general area.

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 ETVEP focuses primarily on substations and transmission lines and does not show the proposed energy center identified.

According to Idaho Power, while the proposed energy center is not a renewable energy facility, it supports the renewable energy infrastructure by being available as needed to meet demand when wind and solar are not at their max production due to lack of wind or sun. This on-demand redundancy will help deliver power 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. Notably, the Applicant is pursuing variance from maximum height and maximum ambient noise standards.

- **Title 7, Chapter 2:** See Findings 1 and 3
- **Title 7 Chapter 3:** Applicable procedures will be followed.
- **Title 7 Chapter 5:** The subject Site is relatively flat, however if grading involves modifying existing slopes greater than 15% or creating new slopes greater than 15% a Hillside Permit will be required.
- **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 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 the County will continue to work with the Applicant to ensure adequate prevention and protection.

- **Title 10:** See Master Site Plan findings. No land divisions are proposed. In regard to Chapter 5, on January 9 the County received additional information regarding on-site circulation, particularly between the gas-fired powerplants and the switching station, and is reviewing to determine if a Private Road Application is required.
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 Zoning Ordinance provides the purpose statement for the M2 Zoning District in Section 7-2-5 (G), stating:

The purpose of the M2 district is to manage the development and location of heavy industry. If requested by the Director, Commission or the Board, may be required to include and authorize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which will specify certain required steps leading to the process of evaluating and developing. The Heavy Industrial designation is specifically established for heavy manufacturing and processing industries.

The natural gas power plant, accessory facilities, and switching station are allowed conditional uses and are designed to be compatible with heavy manufacturing and processing industries. The power plant exhaust stacks and operational noise levels reflect the industrial character similar to other uses allowed in the M-2 zone.

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

Required Findings for Electrical Generating Facilities Per Section 7-2-103:

- A. *Additional standards or requirements for this use. Certain types of electricity generation facilities are permitted as conditional uses in zones as specified in Title 7, Chapter 2, Table 7-2-27 (B) and must adhere to the following conditions. Listed 1 through 12.*

Staff Response:

Idaho Power's Application generally demonstrates compliance with the standards in this subsection. The Project uses an allowed fuel type (natural gas), commits to meeting State and Federal agency requirements, and has coordinated tower height with impacted airports and Mountain Home Air Force Base. Idaho Power is requesting one variance from these standards: an increase in the allowable ambient noise level to 75 decibels at 750 feet, compared to the code standard of 58 decibels.

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

Staff Response:

Compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, Titles 7,8, and 10 is discussed in Finding 2 above. Other Zoning Ordinance Titles including Title 9, Building Regulations, will be reviewed separately as the development continues on the Site, and nothing in the approval of the CUP acts in lieu of building permits or prevents the ability to apply Building Regulations. The proposed use was discussed with affected agencies, including County agencies, on

November 13, 2025. Coordination will follow with County agencies potentially impacted by the Project including:

- Elmore County Engineer
- Elmore County Sheriff
- Elmore County Ambulance District
- City of Mountain Home
- Mountain Home Highway District
- Oasis Fire Protection District

Impacts and costs to the County through the lifecycle of the Project, identified by these agencies, will be incorporated into a Development Mitigation Agreement.

Additionally, this CUP will not override any County Ordinance or prevent the County from ensuring compliance with any Ordinance not herein identified.

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 to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Central District Health
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Power
- Idaho Department of Water Resources
- Idaho State Fire Marshall
- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
- Office of Energy and Mineral Resources
- Union Pacific Railroad
- U.S. Fish and Game
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Army National Guard

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:

The Elmore County Comprehensive Plan anticipates this area to be used for heavy industrial processing and manufacturing land uses, with which a powerplant with industrial machinery and exhaust stacks would be typical and expected. The switching yard also has electrical components that have a look and feel typical of similar facilities like electrical substations located in a variety of zones across the county. The proposal is going through extensive review and will be conditioned to ensure that the proposed use is designed,

constructed, and maintained in such a way to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing and anticipated future character of the general vicinity. Therefore, the proposed use is not expected to change the essential character of the area.

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

Staff Response:

Staff, the Commission, and affected agencies reviewed the proposed use to determine whether it would create hazards, disrupt neighboring uses, or impede their normal development. The surrounding land is zoned for heavy industrial use and is primarily vacant or used for agriculture. The nearest non-agricultural use is medical waste facility across Simco Road. Primary concerns that could negatively impact neighboring properties include construction traffic, exhaust stacks potentially interfering with flight paths, and noise. Construction traffic will be required to be managed and impacts to the County services will be further addressed through a Development Mitigation Agreement. The Applicant has contacted area airports, including Mountain Home Air Force Base, and received written confirmation that flight operations will not be affected. Noise will be mitigated to the extent practicable and, according to the Applicant, will be comparable to other industrial uses in Mountain Home. The nearest existing use is significantly farther than the 750-foot noise measurement point and will also experience ambient noise from traffic and other sources, making the impact from Idaho Power's operations minimal.

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 Peregrine Energy Center will not generate noticeable traffic, construction will create a temporary surge from contractor vehicles, heavy delivery trucks, and construction equipment. To mitigate and ensure safety the contract must have traffic control plan during construction.

Police Protection and Emergency Response: Construction-related traffic and activity 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 timing, roles, responsibilities, communication procedures, training opportunities, and resource availability specific to the substation. Establishing this coordination in advance ensures local responders are prepared for site-specific hazards and demonstrates Idaho Power's commitment to proactive collaboration with emergency services. Idaho Power submitted additional information regarding fire prevention and protection on January 9, 2026 which Staff is still reviewing.

Drainage Structures: No concerns exist regarding the Project to meet drainage requirements.

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

Water and Sewer: Idaho Power intends to establish a domestic well and septic system for the Site after obtaining the appropriate permits. If these permits cannot be secured, the Site can 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.

- 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:

Exhaust from the power plant will be monitored and controlled to comply with EPA standards. Noise levels will remain within the limits approved by the County through the variance request. Additional noise studies and observations will be necessary, and design and construction progresses to ensure noise requirements are met. No additional smoke,

fumes, glare, or odors are anticipated during normal operations. However, natural gas creates a hazard as a leak or other accident can have extensive impact. Idaho Power must provide assurances that the upmost care is taken to prevent natural gas accidents during construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of the natural gas infrastructure. This should include redundant systems to prevent leaks and other accidents.

Vehicle traffic will be minimal, except during construction, when the applicant will be required to implement a traffic control plan, as needed and enter into a Development Agreement to address the County service costs that construction traffic will generate.

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

Staff Response:

Development of the relatively flat Site along Simco Road is not expected to impact any scenic features of major importance.

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 generation and processing operations, for safety reasons, no public non-vehicular access is permitted. Any on-site employees or authorized visitors to the Site that arrive in a vehicle and walk the Site will wear safety gear as required and otherwise follow safety protocols. Any marked parking spaces will have a clearly-delineated path to the primary entrance of the O&M building(s).

C. Automobile Access and Internal Circulation:

Staff Response:

Once operational vehicle access will be limited, with only operations and maintenance staff accessing the Site. No concerns have been raised regarding access or circulation so long as all components have gravel access roads provided. On January 9, 2026, the County received additional information about the Site including clarification of the gravel road connections to and between the gas-fired power plant and the switching station. The County has not yet determined whether a Private Road Application is required.

D. Additional Off-street Parking Design Standards.

Staff Response:

Parking will be provided meeting Ordinance standards, similar to other natural gas power-plants in Elmore County.

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:

The natural features analysis provided by the Applicant did not detect any natural constraints. Hydrology, soils, topography, and vegetation are adequately addressed through the Master Site Plan.

b. Historical and Cultural Resources; and

Staff Response:

According to the Applicant, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office did not include any known Historical or Cultural resources at the Site in the Idaho Cultural Resources Information System or the National Register of Historic Places.

c. Sensitive Plant and Wildlife Species; and

Staff Response:

No specific habitat for sensitive plant or wildlife species identified. Standard monitoring for ground nest for sensitive avian species will be completed prior to construction.

d. Any impacts on Natural Features

Staff Response:

Construction on a relatively flat Site is understood to not have impact on natural features.

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

a. Screening; and

Staff Response:

The Site will have six-foot screening.

b. Drainage; and

Staff Response:

Although drainage will be reviewed in greater detail, there is currently no indication of potential drainage issues.

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:

The proposal does not indicate any potential for erosion or sedimentation in nearby water channels. Disturbed areas will be revegetated, and standard erosion control measures will be required to be implemented during construction.

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 required.

f. Utilities; and

Staff Response:

The Master Site Plan does not show on-site utilities. It is understood and required that—besides certain higher voltage powerlines necessitated to be above ground for technical reasons—all on-site utilities will be installed underground consistent with the Zoning Ordinance.

g. Maintenance; and

Staff Response:

At this stage of review not a lot of information is provided regarding maintenance. However, the expected level of maintenance is planned to be required as part of the CUP approval.

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

Staff Response:

No additional information or modifications to the Master Site Plan related to existing natural features is recommended.

i. Alternative Master Site Plan

Staff Response:

The Applicant has not provided a request for Alternate Site Development

Preliminary Findings on 3 Variance Criteria (7-3-13 (C)) for VAR-2025-03A Height

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

1. The variance shall not grant a right or special privilege that is not otherwise allowed in the base zone; and

Staff Response:

The proposed power plant and associated development are conditionally permitted in the M2 base zone. A height-related variance is granted to another use by the County - Fat City Fireworks - for their Billboard Sign in M2 Zone. Therefore, the requested height increase does not grant a right or special privilege that is not otherwise allowed in base zone.

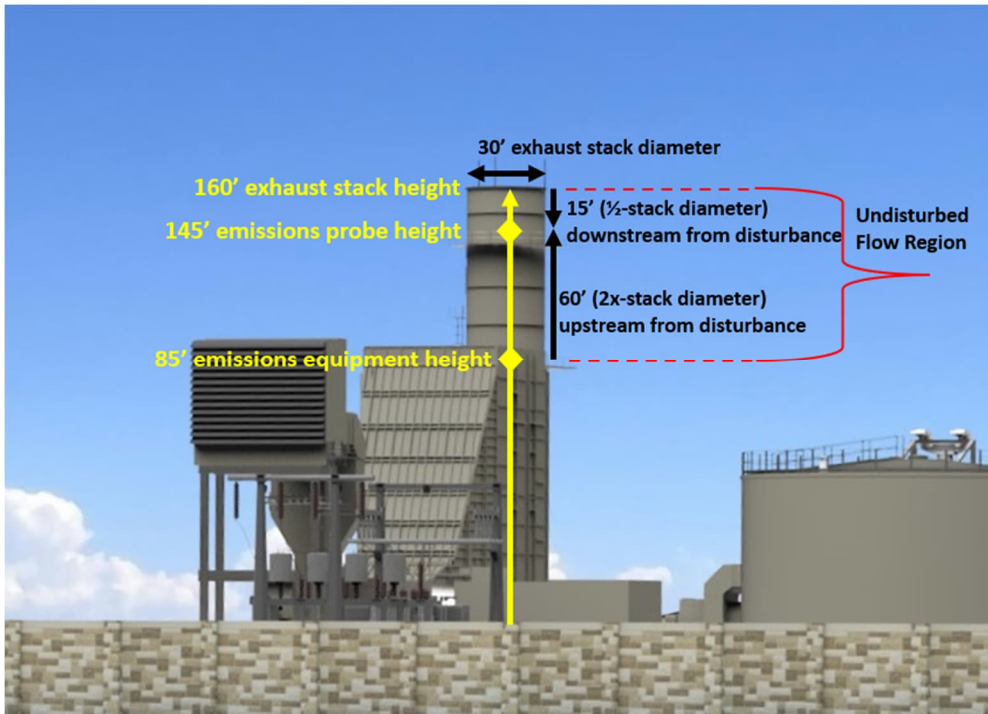
2. The variance relieves an undue hardship due to characteristics of the site; and

Staff Response:

As with all M2-zoned sites, the height limit is 80 feet. This creates a hardship because meeting technical and regulatory requirements becomes impractical. While some components, such as the inlet filter plenum, also exceed 80 feet, the requested 160-foot height is driven by the exhaust stacks.

The stack height is primarily dictated by EPA standards for emissions monitoring equipment. EPA requires the sensor probe to be placed at a distance equal to twice the stack's diameter above the emissions equipment. Here, the emissions equipment is at 70 feet, with the first probe 60 feet higher and an additional 30 feet for a second probe, resulting in a total height of 160 feet. Taller stacks also improve air dispersion, reducing emissions impact on surrounding areas.

There is no apparent benefit to Idaho Power from the variance beyond meeting regulatory requirements. In fact, the taller stacks increase design, construction, and maintenance costs, and Idaho Power would prefer shorter stacks if not for EPA requirements and air quality considerations.



3. The variance shall not be detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare.

Staff Response:

Idaho Power notes that the increased exhaust stack height will improve public health by enhancing pollutant dispersion from the gas turbines. The primary public safety concern raised has been potential interference with air traffic. Idaho Power has coordinated with the Idaho National Guard, Mountain Home Air Force Base, and private and municipal airports in Elmore County. To address visibility, lighting on the exhaust stacks is proposed. Beyond this lighting measure, no additional concerns or requirements regarding stack height have been identified to mitigate impacts on the public health, safety, and welfare.

Preliminary Findings on 3 Variance Criteria (7-3-13 (C)) for VAR-2025-03B Ambient Noise

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

1. The variance shall not grant a right or special privilege that is not otherwise allowed in the base zone; and

Staff Response:

The proposed power plant and related development is conditionally allowed in the M2 base zone. The surrounding industrial uses, including the auto-shredder with 100 dB-110 dB noise generating equipment, Landfill with 70 dB, have noise levels exceeding 58 dB of the Zoning Ordinance, and therefore, the additional ambient noise limit requested does not grant any additional right or special privilege to the proposed use.

2. The variance relieves an under hardship due to characteristics of the site; and

Staff Response:

Under Section 7-2-103(A)(4), Energy Generating Facilities are limited to a maximum ambient noise level of 58 decibels measured 750 feet from the turbine center. This standard creates a hardship, as it is impractical for the conditionally allowed use even with reasonable mitigation. The Peregrine Energy Center anticipates elevated sound levels from transformers, turbines, and other electrical equipment. Idaho Power plans to reduce noise through measures such as acoustic barriers, vibration isolation, silencers, and sound-absorbing materials.

A preliminary sound study suggests the facility can likely meet the Ordinance's 58-decibel limit, but projected levels are near the maximum even with mitigation. Actual noise levels remain uncertain due to multiple variables, and it is possible the facility could exceed the limit once built. To address this, Idaho Power requests a variance allowing up to 75 decibels, a level they are confident they can achieve.

3. The variance shall not be detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare.**Staff Response:**

The proposed Peregrine Energy Center will occupy approximately 30 acres within a 160-acre Idaho Power Site. The nearest other use is a medical waste facility across Simco Road.

Idaho Power seeks a noise limit 17 decibels above the Ordinance standard. For context, Idaho Power notes that this difference is comparable to the sound range between normal conversation and background music or a vacuum cleaner. At the required measurement point, ambient noise from nearby transportation and industrial operations will blend with plant noise, minimizing impact. Additionally, the noise-generating components are located over 1,000 feet from Simco Road, the closest public road. Given the distance from current and future uses, no nuisance-level difference is expected, and the variance would not be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare.

