

Decision No. 87329

**ORIGINAL**

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of STEPHEN L. BROWN and SHERRY K. BROWN for overhead electric service connections in BROWNWOOD MEADOWS, a rural subdivision in PLUMAS COUNTY, where a majority of the lots are presently served by existing overhead lines.

Application No. 57107  
(Filed February 23, 1977)

O P I N I O N

Applicants Stephen L. Brown and Sherry K. Brown seek authority to deviate from mandatory undergrounding requirements, Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative, Rule No. 15.C.1(b). in Portola, Plumas County, California.

The deviation is requested for a proposed subdivision of nine lots that total 18.2 acres, and that vary in size from 1.4 to 2.3 acres. This is a portion of section 5, Tier 22 North, Range 13 East, Mt. Diablo Base and Meridian, which is three miles west of the City of Portola, on State Highway 70.

This is rural land in an area served by overhead electric installations. Because the surrounding area is now zoned for five-acre minimum lot sizes, there is no requirement by this Commission to underground in the periphery of this subdivision.

Present zoning prohibits further subdivision and allows only one single-family dwelling per lot except lot No. 2, which is zoned to permit multiple units of residential type only.

The adjacent twenty acres owned by the applicants has no present plan for further development.

There is an existing 69 Kv line running directly through the subdivision. This line is now adapted to supply power to the adjacent Maybe Subdivision which received authority to deviate from the provisions of the rules providing for mandatory undergrounding of electric lines in Decision No. 84735 on August 5, 1975.

A complete underground system to serve the subdivision would not only be costly but would cause environmental damage because of the extensive digging required, with consequent damage to the adjacent trees.

The soil in this area is low in nutrients that would feed a variety of plants. It is a soft decomposed schist rock that only supports the growth of evergreen trees which are dense enough to screen the existing 69 Kv line from the highway. There is very little underbrush or other growth except trees because of the soil condition.

The utility is of the opinion that the subdivision could be served by underbuilding the distribution lines beneath the existing pole-supported 69 Kv line. Service could be made available to all of the lots by the addition of only three poles and stringing 7,200 volt conductor under the 69 Kv line. Lot No. 9 can be served by a service wire from an existing pole just south of the lot and no highway crossing is required. This will result in the least disturbance to the local environment and will allow for a distribution system which will not be visible from the highway.

The adjacent Highway 70 is under consideration for designation as a scenic route by the Scenic Highway Advisory Committee, whose staff's opinion is that the least disturbance to this environment is a distribution system which will not be visible from the highway.

There are no other utilities planned, as there will be individual wells and septic tanks for water and sewerage systems. Also, there is no natural gas service in the area.

Plumas County has no formal position with respect to the distribution facilities. However, it does enforce the requirements of the utility company in issuing building permits.

Findings

1. The application of the mandatory undergrounding requirements of Rule 15.C.1.(b) of Plumas-Sierra's tariff to this subdivision is unwarranted.

2. A need exists to keep overhead distribution lines away from Highway 70 because it is under consideration for designation as a scenic highway.

3. Plumas-Sierra's proposal to underbuild the distribution system is fair and reasonable, and would result in the new lines not being visible from Highway 70.

4. In this project it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.

5. A public hearing is not required.

We conclude that the application should be granted as provided in the order which follows.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative is authorized to deviate from the mandatory undergrounding requirement of its electric line extension Rule 15.C.1.(b) of its tariff in providing electric service to the Brownwood Meadows subdivision.

2. A public hearing is not required.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of MAY, 1977.

Valent Batmangch  
President  
William Aguirre Jr.  
Vergon L. Spurgeon  
Charles W. Howell

Commissioners