

**ORIGINAL**Decision No. 90498 JUL 3 1979

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of Kristine M. Kelly  
and Margaret Coit, Assessor's  
Parcel No. 313-241-10 and  
Peter Brush, Assessor's Parcel  
No. 313-241-09, to deviate from  
mandatory requirements for  
underground utilities extension  
for Norman Gage Subdivision,  
Humboldt County, California.

Application No. 58154  
(Filed June 19, 1978)

O P I N I O N

Applicants, Kristine M. Kelly and Margaret Coit, and Peter Brush seek authority to deviate from undergrounding requirements of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) Rule 15, and The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company (PT&T) Rules 15 and 16 for Assessor's Parcels No. 313-241-10 (Parcel 10) and No. 313-241-09 (Parcel 9), Norman Gage Subdivision, Humboldt County, California.

The Norman Gage Subdivision Map was filed with Humboldt County on January 26, 1960. The subdivision is located 7-1/2 miles from the City of Arcata and consists of 28 parcels ranging in size from less than one acre to about eight acres. Parcel 10 and Parcel 9 contain over two acres each. Both overhead and underground utilities exist within the subdivision, but the overhead facilities are of limited extent in the easterly portion of the subdivision and cannot be reasonably considered "significant overhead lines" under the provisions of PG&E's Rule 15.C.1.a.(1). Service to the subdivision is rendered from Fickle Hill Road at the entrance to the subdivision. Underground electric and telephone service has been served to Parcel 7 located about 300 feet east of Parcel 9 toward Fickle Hill Road.

A staff engineer investigated the area with Applicants, Kelly and Coit, and two PG&E representatives.

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The Applicants for Parcel 10 contended that underground service would be impractical or unreasonable due to the following reasons:

1. undergrounding across the creek that crosses Parcels 10 and 9 would jeopardize use of the creek as a potable water supply;
2. undergrounding would be impractical in the road due to rockiness, especially at a bluff rock outcropping at Parcel 2, and would cause severe road maintenance problems;
3. undergrounding would be impractical in the steep terrain involved; and
4. the cost of undergrounding is excessive.

Regarding Item 1, field investigation shows clearly that the only areas where the creek bed would be disturbed by underground service are on Parcel 9, where said creek needs to be crossed in two locations. In both locations, the creek bed is steep, very rocky, and has substantial growth including large tree roots. The two existing footbridges leading to the Brush residence on this parcel could be used to support the services (PG&E and PT&T) on the underside of the footbridges both avoiding the creek bed trenching and causing no visual impact of overhead lines. Therefore, deviations should be granted in those locations on Parcel 9. However, in those areas of the footbridges, the service should be clearly identified as to voltage hazard, and should have mechanical protection such as rigid metal conduit.

The second item, regarding the rocky area of the road, is not valid since underground conduit can be installed in the roadbed which consists of compacted baserock to a depth sufficient to allow a concrete encasement over the top of the conduit to prevent washout, and allow a cushion of baserock over the encasement for vehicular traffic. Such an installation should cause no added maintenance problems in the road.

The third contention that undergrounding is impractical due to the steepness of terrain is not supported by inspection, as no unusually steep terrain is encountered between the existing underground service to Parcel 7 and Parcels 9 and 10. In fact, the slopes in these areas are quite gentle.

Finally, undergrounding costs are, of course, substantially more than equivalent costs of overhead service, the details of which follow. However, the difference in costs does not support the allegation since it is not unusual in this regard.

A PT&T letter indicates approximate costs to the company for underground service to both Parcels 9 and 10 of \$2,738 and of \$2,317 for overhead service, with costs to the Applicants of zero in both instances.

A PG&E letter indicates approximate costs to the company for underground service to Parcel 10 of \$9,282 (not including trenching and backfilling) and of \$3,876 for overhead service, of which \$4,054 and \$1,101, respectively, would be charged directly to Parcel 10 Applicants, Kelly and Coit.

Additionally, PT&T stated in its letter that it cannot support the deviation request for overhead facilities since existing underground facilities for telephone and electric have already been extended into the subdivision underground, while PG&E took no position on the request.

Letters from the County of Humboldt indicate that no undergrounding requirement applies to this subdivision and support Applicants' (Kelly and Coit) request for a deviation from undergrounding requirements.

Staff and PG&E representatives also reviewed the other lots in the tract not currently served with electric and/or telephone service in an attempt to assess any apparent need for other undergrounding deviations. While uncertainty exists insofar as

placement of dwellings on those lots is concerned, it appears that they can be practically served underground without unusual problems. The unusual condition of crossing creekbed, as on the Brush parcel, does not appear to occur on these other lots. Any unforeseen and unusual difficulties in serving underground to those lots should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Authorization to deviate from the undergrounding requirements of Rule 15 of PG&E and Rules 15 and 16 of PT&T should be granted for Parcel 9 only in the two locations where the creek is crossed by existing footbridges. Deviation in other areas of Parcel 9 and Parcel 10 should be denied because sufficient justification has not been shown.

#### Findings

1. Properties owned by Applicants are located about 7-1/2 miles from the City of Arcata in the Norman Gage Subdivision, Humboldt County, California.

2. The County of Humboldt submitted letters indicating that no undergrounding requirement applies to this subdivision and supporting Applicants', Kelly and Coit, request.

3. PG&E estimated the cost for underground service to Parcel 10 at \$9,282 to the company and \$4,054 to Applicants, Kelly and Coit, compared to overhead service costs of \$3,876 to PG&E, and \$1,101 to Applicants. PG&E took no position on the deviation request.

4. PT&T estimated the cost for underground service to Parcels 9 and 10 at \$2,738 to the company compared to overhead service cost of \$2,317, with no cost to the Applicants in either case. Additionally, PT&T stated that it cannot support the request for deviation due to the existence of underground facilities in the subdivision.

#### Conclusions

1. A public hearing is not required.

2. The application should be granted only on a limited basis as provided in the order which follows.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Pacific Gas and Electric Company is authorized to deviate from the mandatory undergrounding requirements of its electric line extension rule of its tariff in Assessor's Parcel No. 313-241-09, Norman Gage Subdivision, Humboldt County, California, only in the two areas of the creek where footbridges cross it by supporting the line on the undersides of those bridges. All other service to this parcel, and to Assessor's Parcel No. 313-241-10, is not authorized such deviation.

2. The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company of California is authorized to deviate from the mandatory undergrounding requirements of its telephone line extension rule of its tariff in Assessor's Parcel No. 313-241-09, Norman Gage Subdivision, Humboldt County, California, only in the two areas of the creek where footbridges cross it by supporting the line on the undersides of those bridges. All other service to this parcel, and to Assessor's Parcel No. 313-241-10, is not authorized such deviation.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 3rd day of JULY, 1979.

John E. Burns  
President

Gregory L. Altman

Robert W. Howell

Clarence J. DeSjue

Howard M. Smith  
Commissioners