

Funds holding up power line move

AltaLink wants to move lines over Big Lake before west regional road construction completed

BY BRYAN ALARY
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A local environmentalist wants to see more action from city hall on the relocation of power lines that cross Big Lake.

Elke Blodgett said the power lines have been an ongoing concern because birds frequently are electrocuted when they fly into them. She said the "ugly, man-made intrusion into Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park" is not compatible with the area, nor does it do justice to Hole's memory.

"I'm concerned about the lack of activity trying to get the power line relocated."

Blodgett said she has been in contact with AltaLink, and was

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SCOTT SCHREINER
AltaLink

told they'd prefer to move the lines before the city completes construction of the west road.

Spokesperson Scott Schreiner confirmed AltaLink is prepared to file the necessary application to move the line with the Alberta Energy Utilities Board (EUB).

"The issue of bird contacts with the line is a serious one and AltaLink takes it seriously," he

said.

AltaLink has presented an option to relocate a portion of the power lines near the west road bridge to the city. Schreiner didn't know if timing is an immediate concern, but did say the job would be easier during the road construction phase.

"Clearly, the sooner it's able to be done would make for less impact," he said. "At this point, it's really up to the city."

Planning and engineering general manager Guy Boston said AltaLink presented the city with a number of alignment options to move the power lines. The city's also discussed the issue with the province.

But moving the structure won't come cheap, Boston cautioned.

Estimates for the entire line run between \$800,000 and \$1 million. The city hasn't identified specific funds for the project.

"All we need is the funds," Boston said.

During her presentation, Blodgett suggested the city could soften the financial blow by partnering with AltaLink and the province.

"The longer we wait, the more likely it will not get done at all."

Boston told council AltaLink has offered to contribute financially, but not the full cost. It's unclear if the lines could be moved this year, but the job is expected to be about a two- to three-month task, he said.

Mayor Paul Chalifoux said there could be an opportunity to

add the project to the 10-year capital plan, but that would depend on provincial funding in today's (Wednesday) budget. He suggested there might also be an opportunity to revisit a potential partnership with the province, noting that Alberta Community Development expressed interest prior to the PC leadership change and cabinet shuffle last year.

"It would be best for us to have a look at what kind of money we have after April 19," Chalifoux said.

Coun. James Burrows suggested council could hold a special meeting on the issue, if time becomes a concern. But he opted to leave it in the mayor's hands for now.

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