

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 17, 2020 9:00 A.M.
VIA ZOOM

Officials Present: Chairman Galicki, Councilmember Nairn, Mayor Koons,

Visitors: Dave Conley, Illuminating Company/First Energy; Murray, Morningside Dr.; Collin Cunningham, CVT

Dave Conley stated that Mrs. Murray requested the opportunity to go underground with utility lines, and as far as First Energy is concerned, this would be billable to the property owner, which would be the Village of South Russell. For this reason, he came directly to the Village. He said that Mrs. Murray may indicate she is willing to pay for this, but it could be tens of thousands of dollars for this type of work. In the road right-of-way, any underground cable would need to be encased in concrete and conduit that the customer's contractor would have to install, which would be additional cost to the trenching. Furthermore, instead of being the single pole, there would be two poles on either end for the wires that would go underground, which would be bigger, heavier, thicker wires. He advised that it would cause more obstruction to go underground than to stay as planned with the overhead line pole. Nairn asked if the proposed new pole would be going into the Murray's front yard. Conley explained it would be on the Morningside Drive side of the property but was not sure of the orientation of the home.

The Mayor advised that the second member of Council was joining the meeting, so this would become an official meeting. The Mayor called the meeting to order at 8:57 a.m. He advised the meeting was being recorded and pertained to the location of a CEI pole on the eastern side of the property of 71 Morningside Dr. in Lake Louise. The pole is in the right-of-way at the corner of Morningside Dr. and Green Valley Dr.. The Mayor stated Conley was at the location on June 16th, and the Mayor was there Saturday, June 13th. The issue started in May with the proposed location of the pole, and the Murray's asked if they could be heard.

The Murrays joined the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Murray thanked the committee. He stated he and his wife were surprised when they discovered a pole was to be placed in their front yard. Had it not been for the Stay at Home order, they might have come home from work to find it. Their biggest concern is that this is a band aide for a larger problem that exists in Lake Louise and parts of South Russell with power outages that last for extended periods of time. He stated that these outages were occurring in a part of the line that would not have been fixed by this solution. He questioned why First Energy would zig zag the lines through the neighborhood as opposed to finding a better solution. There are lines that go through backyards for miles in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Murray stated that they are not only thinking about the integrity of their home, but the integrity of the neighborhood and Village. She estimated that they lose power a half dozen times a year, and it is always in a different location. She said she understood the safety issue, but asked what would fix this one particular line when other lines go down creating issues. Mrs.

Murray reiterated that it is a band aid, and she was wondering how the community can rally together to figure out a solution that is not just fixing a problem that continues to happen over and over. She said that this was the first time that the line First Energy wants to move had gone down. It was not a reoccurring situation. Mr. Murray stated that in the seven years they had lived in the home, there was never an issue in that part of the line before. He added that aesthetically, they also had an issue with the pole. Seven years ago when they purchased their property, they spent a lot of money removing trees and adding a front yard to improve the appearance. The pole would be going in the center of the landscaping they had done. They questioned its purpose and said it would not stop the power company from coming to Lake Louise several times a year because there were so many other issues down the line.

Galicki referred to Mrs. Murray's statement about the repeated problem with power outages, and asked if she was referring to Lake Louise or the Village in total. She clarified that it was within the development. She advised that Ridgecrest often loses power, and other times half of the neighborhood would go out and the other half would not. Mrs. Murray surmised that they result from old lines and old trees. She understood that something had to be done, and she discussed other solutions with Mr. Conley. She thought about the value of her home and community as well as the Village. She asked what her other options were and what the Village could do to rally to help the neighborhoods which continued to be littered with lines.

The Mayor stated that there were two issues, one was the pole and one was Lake Louise. He thought the pole needed to be addressed first. Conley advised that the pole was being placed in the specific location to reroute primary lines that run through heavily vegetated areas. First Energy has a requirement to provide a certain level of power reliability, safely, and economically. The pole allows them to do that and it is the only option currently available. This was the criteria used in the decision to move the pole to that location. After his conversations with Mrs. Murray and hearing her concerns, he verified with the line shop personnel this was what had to be done to meet the requirements. It would allow them to improve reliability without removing the forestry. He stated safety is a major concern. When working in an area where vegetation can fall and damage the primary line, it creates a dangerous situation for the crews and the public. For all these reasons, this location was determined to reset the pole and move the primary wires.

Mr. Murray asked why the decision was made to move this portion of the line so quickly. It was the first time this portion of the line had gone down in the seven years they had lived in the home. Yet, no movement had been made on the pole directly in their backyard. There had been crews working on this line the previous week and four times previously over the past seven years because it had gone down. Conley stated he could not speak to any line issues in the past, but with the current line, recently there was an outage where the crew responded and identified the issues and the landscape there. At that time, they determined in order to meet their requirements to safely, reliably, and economically restore power, the line needed to be moved.

With regard to the use of the term, "heavily vegetated area," Mrs. Murray said it was a backyard with trees, but not a forest. She said their yard is not heavily vegetated in the back because they chose to remove the trees. Had they not spent \$30,000 removing the trees, they too would be

heavily vegetated. She asked what the restrictions were for the backyard, and why could First Energy not consider rerouting for the safety and think about other options. Conley stated it is necessary for the company to have access to their equipment, which can be an issue and safety is another piece. Mrs. Murray asked whose obligation it is to trim the trees, and Conley stated First Energy operates on a four-year maintenance cycle to trim outside of the right-of-way of the primary distribution circuit. Outside of the right-of-way, there are trees that can cause issues. Murray asked if the cost of removing the branches and trees that obstruct the line would be greater than the cost to put the new line up. Conly said he did not have those figures in front of him, but First Energy can only trim to a certain level and any trees outside the area which they cannot access are not their trees to trim and this aspect cannot be controlled. He reiterated that it comes down to having access and safely and reliably operating it. Economically, moving the pole to the new location was determined to be the correct course of action.

Nairn asked if the discussion involved just one pole that would be erected on the Murray's property. Mrs. Murray stated yes. Nairn asked the location of the pole, and Murray stated it would be in the front yard. She explained that there is one pole which will entail wires that will run the entire perimeter of the front yard. They will have the only home on the street with wires in the front and back of their home.

Murray addressed the cost and safety issues as well as their home value with the wires running around the front of her house.

The Mayor stated that the Village is always concerned about home values and people's property. He stated it seemed this was the easiest and cheapest solution. To go underground would be very expensive. The wooded area east of the Murray's home, in the opinion of the Mayor and First Energy, is heavily wooded. He did not see a solution other than the suggested location for the pole. The Mayor stated he thought there was a long-term issue with the Lake Louise neighborhood, but that would not get solved today. The Mayor stated the pole would have to go where First Energy indicated, but he thought they could get a commitment from First Energy to look at the Lake Louise issues. He thought this would be the best compromise that could be reached. The pole would be in the Murray's yard, but it would be taken from a more dangerous area behind someone else's home.

Mrs. Murray stated the problem that she was having was that this is the easiest solution for everyone but them. It was easier to make one homeowner feel that their lifestyle must change due to the fact that it was easier for First Energy. She felt it was a case of big companies winning again. As a taxpayer, Murray stated that the Village needed to do something. Stand up and think about what the Village was looking like. She stated it was littered with lines. If this is the solution, Mrs. Murray asked if it would be an option for her to call a tree service to determine the cost of removing the trees that were obstructing the line. She added that she had already spoken to the homeowner.

Galicki asked Conley if it was a matter of access to existing poles and the relocation of the pole to the Murray's yard would help mitigate those issues, or was it a power distribution issue where the pole needed to be relocated to help distribute electricity. Conley stated that one pole with the

primary on it would be moved. The primary feeds approximately 40 different customers. If a branch were to fall into it, it would be a lengthy restoration because of the geography. By moving it, these obstacles would be eliminated. The new location would enable First Energy to provide faster restoration. He explained that it was the distribution aspect where it would improve the reliability in the neighborhood. Murray asked how many homes were affected by the line. Her understanding was that there were three homes. She added that her power did not go out on the one time that the line went down. It affected the four homes around the wire, and she asked if this solution was for those four homes. Conley explained that this is the primary line that feeds the circuit for approximately 40 customers. Some of the other lines are secondary service that would directly feed just those individual customers. Murray clarified that the line that went down was only feeding those customers. Conley said he did not have an answer for that specific situation. Murray said the line that went down only affected a small number of homes, which was why she thought it was a secondary as opposed to a primary line.

Murray asked if it were the consensus that there was nothing that could be done to protect the integrity and value of their home and neighborhood, and whether everyone felt good with this.

Regarding Mrs. Murray's statement that two and a half sides of her home would have wires, Nairn clarified that this would be if the line went up. Mrs. Murray concurred. Nairn asked if there were other properties in Lake Louise with this situation. Mr. Murray said he would have to check. Most homes in Lake Louise have either all front yard or all backyard lines. The Murray's street has all backyard. The point in question is where it transitions and then goes up Cascades Dr. in the front yards. Murray stated it was usually either or but not both.

Mr. Murray stated that when this issue began, he had asked about the cost of burying the lines but had not been given an answer. If the cost were affordable, he would consider it.

The Mayor asked Conley if they should adjourn the meeting and allow him to find this information and reconvene in a couple of days. Conley explained engineering would be involved that First Energy does not typically do for this situation. He added that it is expensive. Conley said he could research it further. Mr. Murray said he was not looking for a study on his property, but if Conley could provide a ballpark cost, perhaps they could entertain this.

Galicki asked Conley whether it is the opinion of First Energy that no other options to improved electrical distribution within that subdivision exist other than relocating this pole to the Murray's front yard. Conley said he could not speak for the entire subdivision, but for this specific instance, that was the decision made and was agreed upon by the line shop personnel and the designer. Galicki stated that no one likes to have utility poles in their front yard. He understood the Murray's concerns. Galicki asked if this were the only solution available, would there be a way to place the physical location of the line on a property line, essentially splitting the difference between two properties, or some way to mitigate the aesthetic issue. Conley stated that it might be possible to shift the location of the pole approximately 10 feet one way or the other north or south.

The Mayor stated that there were a number of options. One is that the proposed location of the pole is in the right of way, the line goes in and that's it and nothing can be done. The Mayor

asked how many poles would be needed if it went underground. Conley stated it would be two poles, one where it goes in and one where it comes back out of the ground. He explained that the line would come across Green Valley Dr. where there would be a pole, and then another pole would be on the southern end of the property. The Mayor added that the line would go along Morningside under their driveway. He clarified that a pole would be at the southeast end and another at the northeast end of the property. Conley said this is correct. He added that the wires that go into the ground are thicker, stronger wires and there would be additional work on the side of the customer to ensure that they are properly secured in the ground in the right of way. Other conduit may be required.

Mrs. Murray stated she understood the economical side of things. She explained that during a recent outage, there were four trucks that responded with five or six employees standing outside the truck for three hours. Mrs. Murray questioned the expense of this compounded by the frequent power issues in the neighborhood. She expressed her frustration in the decision to place the pole in her yard when other lines go down that have nothing to do with the line in question. The most recent line to go down was not questioned because there was no vegetation because the Murray's took the vegetation down to enable First Energy ease in getting to the line. In thinking about the money, they spent to do this, Mrs. Murray was very frustrated. However, she appreciated the time spent by Conley to address the issue and wanted the Village to think about the matter. She wanted the Village to commit to having the problem fixed.

The Mayor stated he would be in contact with Joe Ferenczi, the HOA president, and suggested getting a commitment from Conley that First Energy would look at the situation in Lake Louise to improve the electrical supply. The Mayor reiterated that he did not see a chance that the pole would not go into the east side of the Murray's property. Mrs. Murray said she would continue to explore other options, and she said she would appreciate Conley looking into the cost of putting the line underground. Conley agreed.

Galicki stated that he was aware First Energy had worked hard to improve the electrical distribution in South Russell. When he moved to the Village in 2003, the move-in day was the day of the National blackout. Subsequently, there had been a lot of power interruptions such that he invested in a whole house generator. Since buying the generator, however, the number of incidents had decreased. He acknowledged the Murray's pain and understood the frustration of the power interruptions. Galicki said it seemed that First Energy had worked on distribution issues in other parts of the municipality, and if they could determine the cause of the issues with Lake Louise, it would be appreciated by the residents. If there were improvements that could be made to the electrical distribution system, it would be a wonderful thing.

Mr. Murray stated that what struck him in this process was how lousy they were treated by some of the First Energy employees, and third-party personnel. At the end of the day, he is a customer, and questioned the business practice of installing the line without notifying the resident. He acknowledged that it was in the right of way but added that it would have a great impact on their property. Until they reached Conley, Mr. Murray said it felt as though they were treated as the enemy and not a customer.

Nairn added that she was disturbed that the Murray's received no communication about the pole or that there would be workers on their property. She explained that sending employees to wander around on private property is not done without some sort of forewarning. Nairn was surprised at the Murray's treatment and felt it, too, needed to be investigated. Conley stated he understood and apologized that First Energy could have done a little better job with the communication piece. He had already brought the concerns to the appropriate personnel. He offered his apologies and expressed his appreciation for them as customers.

The Mayor suggested giving Conley eight days to find out the cost of going underground. Conley said this should not be a problem. The Mayor suggested meeting Thursday, June 25, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. He said that Conley would determine the cost of going underground and the Murray's would determine the cost of removing trees on Sharon Gross' property. Mrs. Murray stated she would need to know what trees would need to be removed. Conley was not sure this could be accomplished in the timeframe given by the Mayor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dennis Galicki". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dennis Galicki, Chairman