

CONDEMNATION

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 alternative routes considered that would not have required condemnation. He went over the major technical difficulties with each route coming back to the same conclusion that the proposed route filed with the PUC is the best. Echenrode has said several times condemnation of property is never a desirable option, and the co-op works hard to avoid the process, but all the engineering and environmental studies show the current proposed route is the best.

co-op examine a shorter route putting a part of the power line over county property. Echenrode said while the offer was "generous" it would not change the co-op asking PUC for the right to condemn. "So, the county coming to a written easement agreement, would it change your condemnation work and how much you would condemn of one of our neighbors?" Morrow County Commission Chair Melissa Lindsay asked. "No. We would still have two landowners that we would need to reach mutually agreeable terms and receive an easement on," Echenrode said. He

said while gaining the county easement might lessen the amount of private land needed, there would still be a need for easements across some of the remaining two holdout landowners' properties. "Whether the order of condemnation is for one foot or 100 feet is rather irrelevant," Echenrode pointed out. "I don't think the act of condemnation

changes. How much (land would be needed) could certainly change if a shorter route is obtained," he added. "Condemnation is never a good thing; it's always the last resort. If the county signed an easement, that would certainly work toward minimizing the impact on the land owners, but it would not force any different outcome with the act of condemnation on the landowner," Echenrode emphasized.

Details for an easement agreement between the county and UEC had already been worked out and documents were ready to be signed at last week's meeting, however, the county put off consummating the deal for further study. The agreement was for an easement option with UEC. If the easement were needed UEC would then exercise its option. According to the agreement UEC would pay the county \$1,000 per year for the option and \$16,275 lump sum if the easement were used. The county land

would run is being used by the public works department, and Director Matt Scrivner has been directly involved with the negotiations and easement details. On delaying signing of the easement option, Echenrode said that until there is written agreement with the county, UEC will continue to plan for the current proposed route and all of the procedures necessary to build the power line there. He added that if signed, the co-op would not exercise the county easement option if not needed. "So, if I don't need the easement, I won't execute the easement. If for some reason the adjacent landowner is settled, we would not execute the easement and let it expire. If it is in the best interests of a neighboring landowner to look at a shorter route because of the county's generosity, that's great. I can focus on that effort. But I need the county's easement with certainty before I can continue to offer that option with the adjacent

landowner," he said of the ongoing negotiations with property owners. He said without the county easement agreement, the co-op would continue working on obtaining the current power line route without change. "I cannot adjust the route until I have the alternate route that was discussed here today established. So if the county needs some time, I can respect that but I cannot deviate from filing the application with the various agencies until I have an alternative route that is achievable, and that won't happen until the county executes an agreeable set of documents," Echenrode pointed out. "If the county is ready to take action, that is wonderful. If not, I understand." Following an executive session to discuss the proposed easement in private, the county commission made no decision, and placed the UEC easement agreement back on the agenda for the August 26 commission meeting.



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