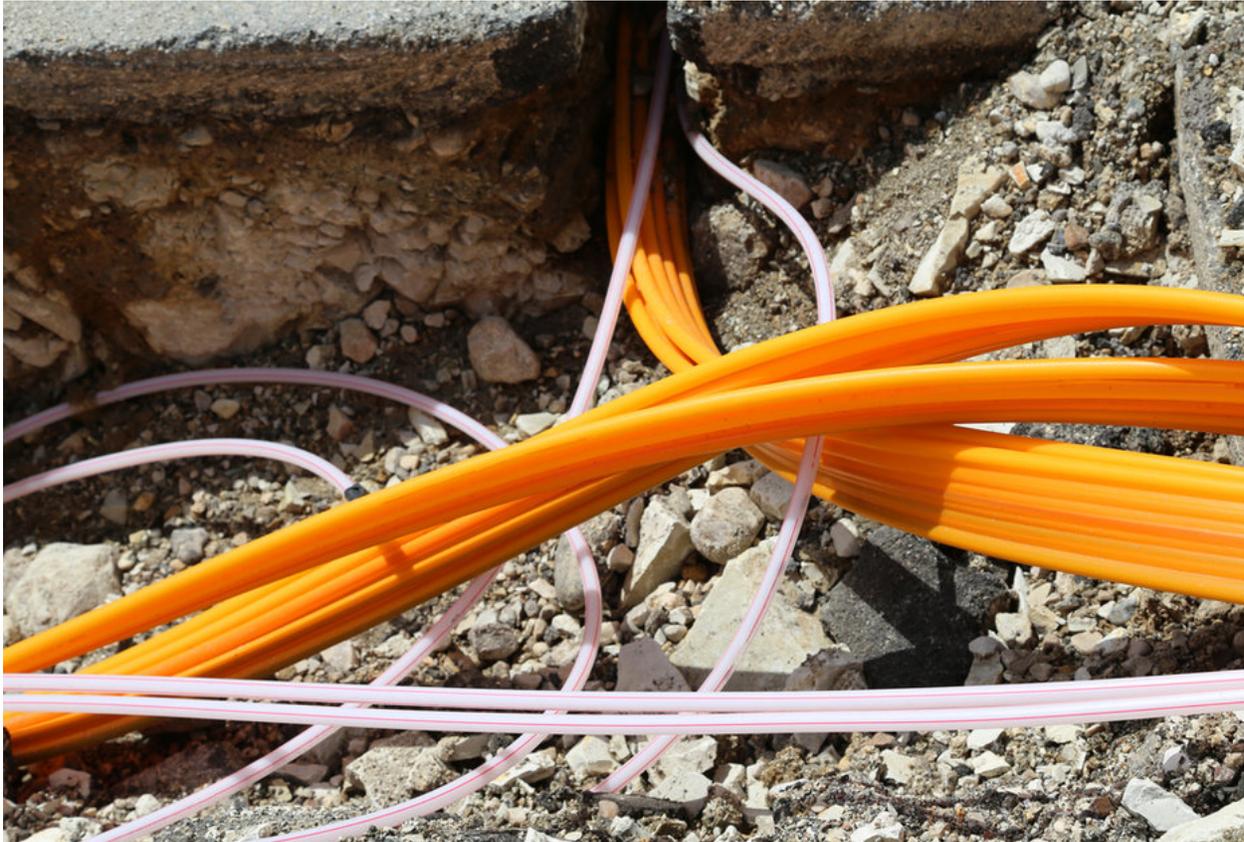


Idaho Counties Consider Banding Together to Buy New Fiber Optic Network

April 24, 2018



(TNS) — NEZPERCE — The Lewis County Commissioners are considering buying into a five-county cooperative to construct a fiber-optic network that would upgrade emergency and public safety services.

Dave Taylor, emergency communications officer for Nez Perce County and Lewiston, met with the commissioners during their regular weekly meeting Monday to discuss the plan.

Taylor is asking commissioners in Lewis, Idaho, Nez Perce, Clearwater and Latah counties to pitch in \$4,200 each to hire a consultant to determine where fiber-optic cable already exists in the region. Following that, fiber-optic cables would be installed in places where there currently are none. Taylor said he hopes the system would be completed within three years to meet the growing needs of emergency communications and support Next Generation 911 services.

Next Generation 911 is intended to replace the original 911 systems that were built using analog rather than digital technologies. The success and reliability of 911 is

expected to be improved with the implementation of Next Generation 911, allowing emergency number services to create a faster, more resilient system that allows voice, photos, videos and text messages to flow from the public to the 911 network.

Taylor said a new fiber-optic network would allow the use of a central data or back-room system made up of 911 calls, dispatch radio, computer-aided dispatch and recording systems that would provide services to the counties.

The ultimate goal, he said, is to improve services and reduce costs of such systems through shared maintenance. In the short term there would be associated costs to build the network and data center.

Some of the funding would come from local 911 fees, grants from the Idaho Public Safety Communications Commission and other resources.

Taylor said he discussed the project with the Idaho County Commissioners three weeks ago and believes they are supportive of the plan. Commissioners have made no commitment on the project yet, however.

Lewis County Commission Chairman Greg Johnson indicated he favors the project, but the board delayed voting on the \$4,200 buy-in for two weeks. Commissioner Mike Ponzoso said he wants some more time to study it.

In other business, commissioners discussed remodeling the magistrate courtroom to include enlarging the judge's desk.

Idaho is modernizing the state online court system, which requires more electronic technology, and the current judge's desk is too small to accommodate the equipment, commissioners said. The remodel may include moving the jury box out of the magistrate courtroom. Any misdemeanor jury trials would be moved to the adjacent district courtroom, which is larger.

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