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**VOTER'S GUIDE**

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## Voters to decide revenue bond for Moyie Hydro repairs May 19

By Mike Weland  
 Mar 13, 2020

Why the repairs are needed ...



On May 19, City of Bonners Ferry voters will be asked to decide on a \$4,145,000 hydroelectric revenue bond necessary to completed much-needed repairs to the venerable Moyie Hydro Dam.

A revenue bond is the best of a few options available, city officials say, and the most cost-effective way to keep the dam in service and Bonners Ferry electrical rates among the lowest in the state and country.

City Council approved an ordinance at the March 3, 2020 council meeting which provides estimated bond costs and directs the County Clerk to prepare the special election ballot for the May 19 vote.

Built in the 1940s, much of the concrete on the dam, including that on the face and sidewalls, is spalling, or breaking, flaking or falling away, and it has reached the point where not addressing the problem would impact the city's ability to meet the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) stringent relicensing requirements.

"Crews have been patching as best they can for about 30 years," said City Engineer Mike Klaus. "It's reached a point now where it has to be fixed if we want to keep the dam in operation."



If approved, the bond would provide funding to remove seven inches of aged and crumbling concrete and replace it with new concrete and rebar. The project is expected to take three construction seasons because work can only be completed between mid-July through October, because of weather and river flows.

“If the city tried to make the repairs without the bond, electricity rates would have to be raised significantly over a much shorter time to fund construction as it occurs. However, if the revenue bond is supported, it would be paid back through electricity rates over a 20 year period,” said City Administrator Lisa Ailport.

If the city decided not to make the repairs, the Moyie Dam would not meet FERC licensing requirements and the city would be faced with having to decommission the dam in 2029, when the current license expires. The cost of removing the dam would most certainly lead to higher electrical rates, since all the city power would be purchased from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The Moyie Dam currently provides for approximately 30% of the overall energy needs for city customers.

At present, city residents pay 6.5 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) while the state average is around 11 cents per kWh. The national average for electricity is 13.19 cents per kWh.

Construction on the dam is slated for the summer of 2021, pending the results of the bond in May. To learn more about the City’s revenue bond request or the construction project at the Moyie Dam, visit Bonners Ferry City Hall, 7232 Main Street, or call (208) 267-3105.

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Mike Weland

Publisher

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