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JAN 29 2026
PLANNING OFFICE
CITY OF PONDERAY

Special Use Permit Application

Site/Project Information

Brief Project Description:	Develop 6 acres with substation and 115 kV transmission lines to include, 2 driveway approaches, stormwater and landscaping.
Project Representative:	Karen Kendall
E-mail:	Karen.Kendall@avistacorp.com
Phone #'s:	509-495-7599
Location:	165 E. Bronx Road, Ponderay, ID (temporary address)
Legal Description:	36-58N-2W W 1046.8FT OF S 900.11FT OF SWSW E OF HWY 95

Applicant/Owner Information

Name:	Karen Kendall
Legal Owner:	Avista Corporation
Signature:	
Mailing Address:	1411 E. Mission Avenue, MSC-25, Spokane, WA 99202
E-Mail:	Karen.Kendall@avistacorp.com
Phone #'s:	509-495-7599

Ponderay Planning Department

File Number:	UP26-116
Fees:	$700.00 app $2,613.60 SW $3,313.60
Zoning:	Rural
Received By :	LL **Date:** 1/29/26
Comments:	

Bronx Road Substation
Special Use Permit Narrative

Below addresses the written narrative statement in Section B. 1 of SUP application. Avista's responses are provided in blue text.

a. How the proposed use will, in fact, constitute a variance or a special use.

The proposed substation is a critical component of the electrical power system that serves an intermediary point between power generations and the community of Ponderay and surrounding jurisdictions. The substation is a unique use, due to its function, infrastructure requirements and nature of providing safe and reliable power to communities. A substation, identified as a special use permit per the City of Ponderay zoning regulations, serves as a public utility purpose, not defined as a commercial or residential use, rather as a community public facility.

A substation is a facility within the electric grid where voltage levels are transformed to ensure safe and efficient transmission and distribution of electricity. It typically performs three main functions:

i. Voltage Transformation: Converts high-voltage electricity from transmission lines to lower voltages suitable for local distribution.
ii. Switching and Routing: Directs electricity to different parts of the grid and isolates sections for maintenance or emergencies.
iii. Protection and Control: Houses equipment like circuit breakers and relays to protect the system and maintain reliability.

b. Why the proposed variance or special use is necessary or desired.

Over the past decade, the City of Ponderay and its surrounding region have experienced sustained population growth. Between 2020 and 2023 alone, the area's population increased by 15.8%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This rapid growth has significantly reduced Avista's operational flexibility, posing challenges to maintaining reliable and efficient electrical service.

The existing Bronx Switch Station is located at the southeast corner of Hwy 95 and Bronx Road, approximately four miles northeast of the Sandpoint Substation. It functions as a 115kV mid-line breaker between Cabinet Gorge and Sandpoint Substation. Currently, the Bronx site does not include any distribution infrastructure, a necessity to bring more reliable power to the community.

The addition of a new substation brings several important benefits to the community. First, it increases the reliability of the electrical grid by reducing the risk of outages and enabling quicker restoration of service when disruptions occur. Second, it provides greater capacity to meet the growing energy needs of homes and businesses, supporting local economic development and job growth. Lastly, the new substation can improve power quality and stability, helping sensitive equipment operate more efficiently and safely.

c. Whether the proposed variance or special use will be harmonious with and in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the comprehensive plan and/or this title.

The proposed substation is harmonious and consistent with the general objectives of the City of Ponderay's comprehensive plan, which has contemplated utilities and said infrastructure as existing and future needs. The following are components supporting the use of a new substation.

i. Population projections (Figure 25 of Comprehensive Plan) were considered till 2050. Per the four projections of population growth, based upon City and County growth, the annual growth over the next five years warrants the need for increased reliability of electrical services by reducing overloading on existing infrastructure, improving quality of service, adding redundancy to minimize electrical outages and increase capacity for future residential and industry growth.

ii. **The new substation will complement the City of Ponderay's vision to *"…local businesses thrive, and all residences can safely access their needs close by either to recreate, work, go to school, shop or connect with others."*** Providing the infrastructure to allow for safe, reliable, improved quality, and redundancy furthers the vision of the community as growth continues.

iii. **Goal No. 6: *"Ponderay grows responsibly, with public facilities and services that can be sustained."*** Avista's proposed development is assisting Ponderay to grow responsibility with public facilities to increase services for sustainability and expansion meeting the areas' growth demand.

iv. **Goal No. 6, Policy C. *"Ensure that utilities and services are provided concurrently with new or expanded development."*** Over the past decade, the City of Ponderay and its surrounding region have experienced sustained population growth. This rapid growth has significantly reduced Avista's operational flexibility, posing challenges to maintaining reliable and efficient electrical service. The substation is critical to provide the City of Ponderay and region with safe and reliable power to meet the demands of new and expanding development.

v. **Goal No. 7, Policy B. *"Encourage new growth to occur in city limits and where infrastructure and services are available."*** The proposed substation furthers the City's comprehensive plan policy to handle increased demand of new growth by adding to the infrastructure and services available.

vi. **Goal No. 10: *"Ponderay is a hub of innovation and diverse industries where new and existing small businesses thrive."*** The new substation will increase reliability of electrical services, improve quality of service, add redundancy to minimize electrical outages and increase capacity for industry growth.

vii. **Goal No. 11, Policy F: *"…incorporate wildfire resistance strategies."*** Substations are designed and maintained with resiliency in mind to protect critical infrastructure and ensure reliable power delivery is covered in the following four measures. 1) Defensible space and vegetation control are essential. Clearing combustible materials, trimming vegetation, and maintaining a buffer zone around the substation significantly reduce the risk of ignition from embers or direct flame contact. Regular inspections and vegetation management programs help sustain these protective measures year-round. 2) Equipment hardening minimizes ignition sources by upgrading to current-limiting devices and implementing arc-flash protection reduces the likelihood of electrical faults sparking fires. 3) Monitoring and rapid response systems enhance situational awareness. Fire detection sensors, temperature monitors, and remote-control systems allow operators to respond quickly to emerging threats. 4) Finally, adherence to industry standards and best practices, such as fire protection guidelines, ensure that substations meet rigorous safety benchmarks.

By combining these measures, vegetation management, equipment upgrades, advanced monitoring, and compliance with standard utilities can significantly reduce wildfire risks and safeguard the reliability of the electric grid.

d. Whether the proposed variance or special use will be designed, constructed, operated and maintained to be harmonious and appropriate with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area.
The new substation is designed and will be constructed, operated and maintained in a harmonious and appropriate manner maintaining character of the general vicinity.

Avista purchased Parcel No. RPP00000366100A in 2018, totaling 20.06 acres.
Avista entered into a purchase and sales agreement for 2.18 acres from Parcel No. RPP00000366004A located east of the proposed substation. A boundary line adjustment will be processed and completed prior to the special use decision. The parcel will total 22.24 acres; six acres presently being developed.

The general vicinity occupies a mix of commercial, residential, agricultural and existing electrical services. Along Hwy 95, located within a quarter mile of the subject parcel, there is a switching station owned by Avista and a substation owned by Northern Lights. The new substation is located approximately 500 feet from the intersection of Bronx Road and Hwy 95, allowing for a future Avista service center to be built on the corner of the two intersections. The proposed substation and associated uses will encompass six acres, approximately a quarter of the 22.24-acre parcel. The undeveloped portions of the parcel will maintain with the current use of pasture lands for cattle to graze and provide weed control. The proposed and existing uses are consistent with the uses in the immediate vicinity in size and scale. Avista will install a barbed wire fence around completed substation parcel to maintain separation from cattle grazing and improved site.

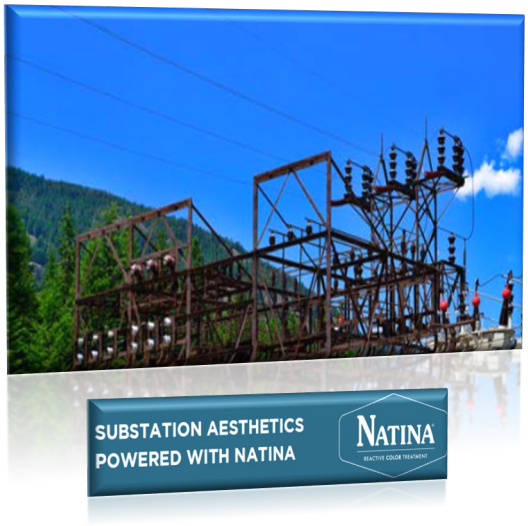
Avista intends to build a new service center on the northeast corner of Hwy 95 and Bronx Road within the next ten years. The service center will include offices for customer support, billing services, account management and office staff. In addition, field operations support, which entails crews, vehicles and material staging for repairing, installing and maintaining infrastructure. The future development of the remaining parcel will further complement the uses along Hwy 95 and the corridor with an office building, parking, landscaping and fenced yard for vehicle and utility equipment storage. The future service center will provide the look and feel of commercial use, consistent with the zoning, as it is adjacent to the visual corridor on Hwy 95. The future use introduces travelers into the community, and the service center will add increased visual separation from Hwy 95 and proposed substation as travelers enter/exit the view corridor of Ponderay city limits.

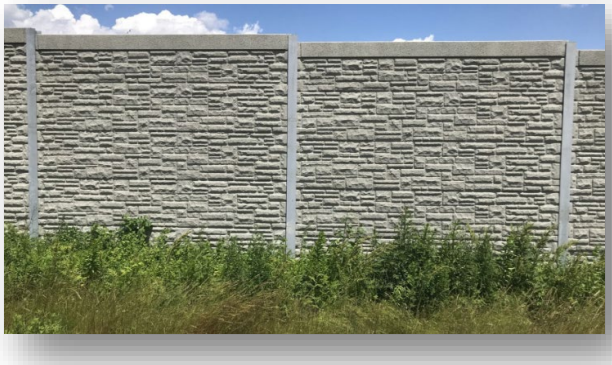
Avista is improving Bronx Road from Hwy 95 to the east edge of Craig Court per City Council approval on August 18, 2025, totaling approximately 1,500 feet, 500 beyond the eastern edge of Avista's owned property. Road improvement consists of paving full width of Bronx Road and an open ditch and 10 feet of right-of-way dedication along the north side of Bronx Road.

Additional measures to preserve the integrity of character to the neighborhood consist of the following.

i. Avista will install landscaping, along the easterly 40 feet of the parcel. Landscaping consists of a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs with dry-land grasses to buffer the adjacent residential use. Landscaping will be maintained by a contractor who will provide water services during appropriate seasons until vegetation is established. Landscaping will be monitored and maintained. Residential uses to the south have existing mature evergreen and deciduous treed vegetation across Bronx Road, thus no additional measure are provided southerly from the development. The westerly side will be softened with landscaping associated with a proposed detention pond.

ii. All infrastructure associated with the substation will be screened behind a nine-foot-high solid brown, durisol-branded noise absorptive wall system (see image below) on all sides, except two vehicular gates and one pedestrian gate located along the south side of the substation.
iii. There will be large landscape boulders along the parcel's frontage between driveway approaches for visual softening.
iv. Lastly, the substation fixtures will have a natina finish, which is a maintenance free, color coating on galvanized steel structures creating a natural non-glare, designed to blend into the natural landscape. The natina finish creates a cohesive and natural appearance of fixtures located above the solid screening wall to ensure visual blending into its surroundings from all angles to include high visibility areas, specifically adjacent to Hwy 95.





Example: Durisol-branded, proposed finish will be brown

e. The effect of the proposed variance or special use on adjacent property and whether it will be hazardous or disturbing to existing neighboring uses.

The new substation being in a neighborhood with a range of uses creates the opportunity for improved reliability and redundancy, increase capacity for growth, as well as maintain and improve system coverage. Lastly, reliable electric infrastructure may contribute to economic development, thus furthering the City's comprehensive plan goals and policies.

Residential structures in the immediate vicinity are approximately 500 feet from the proposed substation and buffered by existing agricultural and/or detached accessory structures and mature evergreen trees. Existing ongoing noise in the vicinity consists of residential uses, equipment to farm and/or cultivate the surrounding lands, vehicle traffic (neighbors, commuters, delivery services, trucks, and mail service) on Bronx Road and Hwy 95, existing transmission line running along northside of Bronx Road and commercial services on west side of Hwy 95 to include an indoor shooting range and recreational vehicle sales. Noise generated from the substation is mitigated by a solid nine-foot-high fence and landscaping buffer along east property line. A noise survey will be completed by Avista before and after substation construction to ensure a negligible increase in noise.

In addition to noise mitigation, visual appearance is addressed with the proposed brown solid fencing and natina finished electrical equipment structures within the substation erected above the screening to blend into the natural landscape and background of the area.

Lastly, electric and magnetic fields (EMF) are present from high-voltage transmission lines to your battery-powered watch. The EMF dissipates with distance and as the substation and equipment is secured behind a nine-foot-high solid fence and developed site perimeter with a distance of 35 feet to edge of improved Bronx Road. Residential use closest to the substation on the south is buffered with mature evergreen trees, approximately 200 feet distance to substation. Residential use to the east of the substation is over 500 feet in distance and separated by existing vegetation and detached accessory structures, with increased separation is proposed with robust landscaping. To the north and west of substation, large spans of open pasture separate uses by 1,000 or more feet. We conclude, per National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences *(Electric & Magnetic Fields | National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences)* we are exposed to more EMF from appliances and equipment inside our homes than from utility infrastructure outside.

f. The identity of the owner or purchaser of the lot which is subject to the proposed variance or special use.

Avista is an energy company dedicated to the production, transmission, and distribution of energy, as well as other energy-related businesses. Through our operating division, Avista Utilities, we provide electricity to nearly 424,000 customers and natural gas to about 383,000 customers across 30,000 square miles in four northwestern states. Since our founding in 1889, Avista has been committed to powering communities, and we are proud to serve in the City of Ponderay. The construction of our new substation in Ponderay reflects our ongoing investment in local infrastructure, ensuring reliable energy for residents and businesses while strengthening our role as a trusted partner within the community. We look forward to continuing our support of Ponderay's growth and sustainability for years to come.

g. Whether the property will be served adequately by essential public services and utilities such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage systems, refuse disposal, water and sewer, and schools; or that the persons or agencies responsible for the proposed variance or special use shall be able to provide adequately any such service or utility.

The property is adequately served by essential services. The proposed substation is providing an essential public service to the community by improving quality of service, adding redundancy to minimize electrical outages and increasing capacity for future residential and industry growth.

h. Whether the proposed variance or special use will create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public services and utilities or will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

The new substation will alleviate strain on the existing electrical grid directly connected to the specific needs of the customers Avista serves. Avista is adding direct benefit to the community with the following improvements beyond the scope of the substation.

i. Improving Bronx Road with pavement from Hwy 95 to the east edge of Craig Court.
ii. Solid nine-foot high Durisol fencing around the entire perimeter of substation.
iii. Natina finish on substation fixtures.

As these investments (substation, supporting infrastructure and jurisdictional requirements associated with the special use permit decision) are incorporated into the utility's standard cost-recovery processes, the proposed special use is not expected to create excessive additional

public expense for services or utilities, nor to negatively affect the community's economic welfare.

i. **Whether the proposed variance or special use will lead to uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions of operation detrimental to any persons, property or the general welfare by reason of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odor.**
The proposed substation will not create functions detrimental to any persons, property or general welfare of the community as it relates to glare, odor, noise and traffic.

The site will have minimal lighting inside the nine-foot-high perimeter fencing, thus eliminating concerns of glare. Wall mounted lighting is located seven feet high on the north and south elevations of the control enclosure building next to each door (3 total). The lighting is an activated LED photocell fixture, no brighter than a typical residential porch light. Additional lights around the perimeter of the substation, pointed towards the interior, are present but will only be used for a rare occurrence requiring emergency work between sunset and sunrise.

During construction, temporary odor may be associated with construction vehicles and dust. Upon completion, the substation will not generate any odor.

Existing ongoing noise in the vicinity consists of residential uses, equipment for farming and/or cultivating the surrounding lands, vehicle traffic (commuters, delivery services, trucks, mail service) on Bronx Road and Hwy 95, existing transmission line running along northside of Bronx Road and commercial services on west side of Hwy 95 to include an indoor shooting range and recreational vehicle sales. Noise generated from the substation is mitigated by a solid nine-foot-high fence and landscaping buffer along east property line. Temporary noise will be generated by construction equipment and personnel during hours which will comply with Ponderay's noise ordinance.

During the initial construction phase, which is expected to last approximately sixteen months, there will be periodic times of increased traffic at the site. This will consist of the mobilization and de-mobilization of grading equipment, delivery vehicles and concrete trucks. Delivery of materials to the site will be several times during the week and will occur during normal working hours. After the initial construction phase, traffic will be significantly reduced and consist of work crews (one to two trucks) entering and leaving the site periodically throughout the workday. Once the station is operational, normal traffic to the site will be reduced to a single maintenance vehicle visiting the site on a monthly basis.

The substation will require close to 1,000 GeoPiers located subsurface as a foundation for the substation to eliminate liquefaction due to the high ground water of the area. This action will occur during site improvements by drilling an area approximately 18 inches in diameter to install the pier subsurface. During site preparation, a minimum of topsoil will be replaced with compacted fill in areas required. The site disturbance and preparation will results in minimal odor, noise and neighborhood disturbance.

j. **Whether the property under the proposed variance or special use will have vehicular approaches which shall be so designed as not to create an interference with traffic on surrounding public roads.**
The substation will require two vehicle approaches for ingress and egress of equipment to deliver infrastructure equipment during construction, only. Each approach is proposed to be a 30 feet

wide paved access point from Bronx Road. Following construction, westerly access will be for emergency access only and blocked with a low-profile vehicle gate and signage.

The number of approaches and their location will not interfere with traffic on Bronx Road. Following construction, the substation will be visited by a single maintenance vehicle visiting the site monthly during daylight hours.

k. Whether the proposed variance or special use will result in the destruction, loss or damage of the natural, scenic or historic features of major importance.
The subject parcel is not designated as having any natural, scenic or historic features of major importance; thus, the use will not have any effect.

l. **A description of the previous use of the property and the intended use, including hours of operation or use, number of employees or occupants, the system for delivery of materials, and the general nature of the business or occupancy**.
The existing use of the property is open pasture, being used for cattle grazing.

The proposed development of a substation is a facility within the electric grid where voltage levels are transformed to ensure safe and efficient transmission and distribution of electricity.

Avista is installing a 300-foot by 389-foot fenced substation with full build out of eight 115 kV transmission lines. The site will be developed with a gravel perimeter of a 15-foot drive isle (received variance approval from Selkirk Fire on October 7, 2025), evaporation and detention pond and landscaping.

The substation and property will be visited by a single Avista maintenance vehicle visiting the site monthly during daylight hours. The site will be visited by a landscape contractor weekly for watering and maintenance of landscaping until established. Then, landscape contractor will visit the site during required times of year as contracted with Avista.

During construction is the only time materials will be delivered frequently for approximately eight of the 16 months. Materials will be delivered by flatbed truck or trailer and immediately unloaded. No delivery vehicles will remain on the site for any longer than needed to safely unload.