

Next UTOPIA vote far from final 'yes'

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CENTERVILLE - UTOPIA cities are weighing whether or not to take the next step with potential business ally Macquarie, but this isn't the final commitment.

Both the Centerville and Layton City Councils will vote in June on whether or not they're interested in moving on to Milestone 2 of negotiations with the Australian business interested in running the struggling fiber optic network. The milestone would go into more detail on the potential arrangement, including specific costs, but is not an official agreement from either side.

"We would just be saying yes to moving ahead with the research," said Centerville Assistant City Manager Blaine Lutz, who also serves as the city's representative with UTOPIA. "There might be some financial commitment for direct costs Macquarie is incurring, but this is by no means a final agreement to the deal."

Centerville will hold an open house on the issue tonight, June 5, at 7:30 p.m. at Centerville City Hall. The city council plans to discuss the issue at their June 17 meeting. Layton, on the other hand, plans to vote on the issue tonight, June 5, and will hold a public hearing as part of their 7 p.m. city council meeting.

As has been established in previous meetings, Macquarie's plan would make UTOPIA a utility service like water or sewer. It would cost between \$18 and \$20 per home, and for that cost residents would receive basic Internet service with speeds of 3 megabits per second at no additional cost. Faster service would cost more, depending on what provider the resident went with.

Several UTOPIA participating cities have already voted to move ahead to Milestone 2, which would generate data for each city and deal with possible questions of implementation. This phase is expected to last through the end of the year.

"We'd be able to really get into detail on the agreement, and get specific information on Centerville and how we could make that work," said Lutz. "It would be helpful data even if we decided not to progress with the deal."

One possible use for the information would be to determine what other options might be available to UTOPIA cities. Though officials in Midvale and West Valley have already approved moving onto Milestone 2, no one has yet determined what would happen if some cities ended up agreeing to the final deal while others did not.

"We have some framework ideas, but it's really difficult to determine our options until we know what the cities are thinking," said Lutz. "There would have to be some agreement on an alternative."

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