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Agencies: Trump's budget would hurt MGH, PUD 3 speak out at forum

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Customers of Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics and Mason County PUD 3 would be harmed by budget proposals by President Donald Trump's administration.

That's one of the takeaways from a presentation by those two agencies and Mason Transit Authority (MTA) June 9 at the hospital in Shelton.

Mason General Hospital CEO Eric Moll said 6,000 Mason County residents benefit from the Affordable Care Act. Two-thirds of the reimbursements to the hospital are from Medicaid and Medicare, he said.

Trump has vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act. If it is repealed and not replaced, the hospital would lose \$2.5 million annually, Moll said. The hospital's net income last year was \$2.4 million, which means a complete repeal would put the hospital in the red, he said.

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is the wholesale electricity provider for Mason County PUD 3, and purchases from BPA represent nearly half of the agency's budget, said Joel Myer, the agency's public information and government relations manager.

"We love them, we really do," he said about the BPA.

The transmission system of the BPA would be sold off under the proposed federal budget for next year released by the Trump administration. BPA is part of the U.S. Department of Energy, but is self funding.

Privatizing BPA would mean higher utility bills, Myer said.

The three agencies also gave updates on their activities.

MTA is celebrating 25 years of service. Launched in December 1992, MTA served 60,000 riders in 1993, with seven

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Forum: Agencies go over statistics during forum at MGH

employees; it now has 85 employees and served 551,934 riders in 2016, said MTA general manager Danette Brannin.

The agency has seven tenants at its new Transit-Community Center, for 100 percent occupancy, she said. In 2018, the center hosted 1,642 people in its conference rooms, 8,419 in the gym, 1,030 in the kitchen and 150 in the atrium, said TCC manager Kathy Geist.

MTA is offering all-summer passes for youths for \$18 that connects with buses from other agencies, including Jefferson and Clallam counties, Geist said.

MTA is also offering four 12-passenger vans for rent to local organizations, she said.

PUD 3 has connected 234 new customers so far this year, Myer said. The agency has also replaced about 12,000 of its 34,000 meters in Mason County, he said. PUD 3 has received 10,000 "likes" on its Facebook page, about 30 percent of its customers, Myers said. In comparison, 2 percent of Seattle City Light customers "like" their utility's Facebook page, and 1 percent of Puget Sound Energy's, he said.

The hospital is in the second year of a program with Virginia Mason Medical Center to develop a leaner managerial system, Moll said.

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Journal photo by Gordon Weeks
Congressman Derek Kilmer (D-Gig Harbor) made brief comments at the beginning of a forum June 9 at Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics. "We have to make sure our top import isn't young people," he said.