

The Commission held a hearing in Sanpete County this week to take comments on the proposed EAS for the County. I was present at the hearing and after hearing the many comments both for and against the proposal, I would like to go on record, if still possible, in favor of the EAS.

Snow College's service area incorporates all of Sanpete County and having to make long-distance calls to prospective students, parents, and employees within the very County that the College is situated is burdensome. Having the ability to call all cities within the boundaries of the County would be a major plus for the College.

I also concur that providing the EAS will unite our County in a way heretofore prohibited by three different phone companies that have provided a uniquely different service throughout the County. Having the EAS is also a positive for attracting economic development to the County and generally (hopefully) bringing in more livable wages for our citizens.

Noting that the County is finally coming out of the depths of unemployment to around a 3.1% but also recognizing that we are still one of the lowest Counties for per capita income, I was empathetic to the concerns of the seniors present at the hearing on fixed social security benefits. I am also concerned for our other families that struggle with poverty level incomes. I did have a conversation with one of the phone company representatives after the meeting and learned that there are programs for such individuals and families similar to the HEAT assistance. More must be done to educate these citizens as to assistance that is available to them so that a now imposed EAS fee does not mean going without the bare essentials of milk, eggs, and bread--or the bare sustenance of life.

I think that I understand why individual's cannot opt out of the EAS, but more must be done, particularly in our County, to provide some means of relief so that the implementation is not a hardship on our most precious senior citizens and low income families. I heard some say that they would just drop their landlines. This also is not acceptable as a landline is the only emergency means of communication that would be available to them.

In summary, I am in favor of the EAS both as an employee of Snow College and as a County Commissioner for Sanpete County. However, I would ask that the Commission consider ways to provide assistance (e.g., reduced fees based on income level) that will not negatively impact some of our citizens as well.

Thank you.

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