



News

Dorchester says 'no' to MAPP aerial lines

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CAMBRIDGE The Dorchester County Council has unanimously voted to support opposition to a plan to run high-voltage aerial power transmission lines from Taylors Island to Vienna.

Following a Feb. 3 public discussion on the 27 miles of Mid Atlantic Power Pathway planned to cross the county, the county council agreed Tuesday to send a letter opposing MAPP as it is currently planned for Dorchester County to Pepco Senior Vice President William H. Gausman with their concerns.

Copies of the letter are being sent to those who spoke during the Feb. 3 gathering at Cambridge-South Dorchester High School. In the letter, the council notes that more than 800 Dorchester residents attended the meeting where Gausman made a presentation about the MAPP plan.

Copies of the letter also have been sent to both of Maryland's U.S. Senators, Rep. Frank Kratovil, D-1st-MD, Dorchester's General Assembly delegation, representatives of environmental organizations including the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and the Maryland Public Service Commission, a permitting agency for the power line project.

"You heard loud and clear that evening the questions and concerns on the minds and in the hearts of Dorchester County residents, property owners, businesses, parents, tourism experts, farmers, forester, preservationists, municipal officials and members of the county council," the letter to Gausman reads, noting that, "only one individual, a non-Dorchester County resident indicated support of the project," during the meeting. "Correspondence, telephone calls and emails to the Council show an equal lack of support for the project," he wrote.

The letter continues, "without further information about the considered alternatives, the County Council is unanimously opposed and will resist efforts to advance the project. At the same time, we will keep an open mind as we gather more information."

In the letter, the council said it doesn't dispute the need for increased electrical power on the Delmarva Peninsula but said, "Dorchester County is a small fraction of the geographic area known as the Delmarva Peninsula and the direct benefits to the residents of Dorchester County from the MAPP project are insignificant, if any. Putting need aside, the obvious adverse environmental and socioeconomic impacts resulting from a project like MAPP, as proposed, far outweigh any perceived benefits to Dorchester County."

A new concern about MAPP was mentioned by the county council, suggesting possible interference with the countywide public safety communications system, "Historically, the integrity of this system has been jeopardized by such high tension lines, affecting not only our radio systems but paging and siren systems as well."

Previous letters from the council to Pepco on MAPP also were mentioned, including a June 2008 letter expressing concerns about the proposed placement of high-voltage transmission lines and urging consideration of underground installation whenever possible.

In December 2008 the council wrote with additional concerns on behalf of the Chesapeake County Heritage Area Management Board and the Soil Conservation District, including "opposition to any path that disturbs or fragments contiguous blocks of cropland and forestland; avoidance of tidal and non-tidal wetlands and other sensitive areas and preservation of the underdeveloped 'view sheds' throughout the county."

Referring to Gausman's Feb. 3 presentation to the county council, the letter reads, "Missing from the information being presented about MAPP is more about PHI's evaluation of alternative systems and transmission line routes either through the county (particularly the underground approach) or underwater along the Nanticoke River, the estimated capital and annual cost of the alternatives (above ground vs. underground or underwater), and the reason why the underground alternative or the Nanticoke River option are not being seriously considered. Your letter to us dated Feb. 5 suggests that you are considering these options."

The council's letter concludes, "While it is often being said that this is a 'very complicated multi-year process,' some things are really quite simple: this project, as we know it, will hurt Dorchester County more than any jurisdiction, local economy or community along the 230 mile pathway..."

"We are intrigued by your suggestion of a broad-based advisory group comprised of Dorchester County stakeholders to foster a 'more structure dialogue.' In the meantime, we look forward to your consideration and response to our comments, concerns and questions."

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