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## PATH Simulation Video Raises Questions

September 29, 2010

By Krista Brick

A new computer-simulated video meant to show how a proposed electric substation in Urbana would be integrated into the landscape did little to quell the fears of those opposing it.

More than 150 people attended an open house held at Windsor Knolls Middle School September 20 about the proposed Kemptown substation. The substation is part of the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH), a 275-mile electric line running from West Virginia. The project is expected to serve the Mid-Atlantic area, and the substation near Urbana is the largest ever built by Allegheny Energy.

The meeting, attended by about 40 representatives from Allegheny Energy, PJM and their consultants, got a bit heated as at least two individuals were escorted out by security guards.

"I was one of the ones 'asked to leave' but not physically escorted out as I saw them do another gentleman. My offense was taking a photograph," said Keryn Newman, who opposes the PATH project.

Gerald Freeman of Mount Airy said he also was told to leave the meeting.

"I was asking questions, and everyone was refusing to give their last names. I was certainly not yelling," Freeman said. "An officer threatened five times to throw me out. I left on my own accord."

Allegheny Energy Inc. spokesman Todd Meyers confirmed that a "couple" of attendees were asked to leave, but said this was only after they refused to calm down.

"Our purpose was to give information to those who want to learn about the substation, its design and screening," Meyers said. "One or two folks who might have raised their voices and didn't calm down were asked to leave."

Meyers said it is company practice to have security at every open house.

Frederick County Cpl. Jennifer Bailey confirmed that two sheriff's deputies were on hand at the meeting at the request of Allegheny Power.

"Allegheny Power requested us to be there as a presence because of the concern that Allegheny Power knew people were upset about the substation," Bailey said. "There were a couple of people who began to become loud and disruptive. They were asked to not do that, and the second time they continued to do it again they were asked to leave and escorted out."

The Kemptown Substation is proposed to take up about 43 acres within a 170-acre agriculturally zoned site. Here 500-kilovolt lines owned by Baltimore Gas and Electric Company and Potomac Electric Power Company form a junction. The Kemptown substation would serve to interconnect the 765-kilovolt PATH with existing 500-kilovolt BGE and Pepco lines to reinforce the regional transmission system and help supply power to customers in all directions, according to PATH representatives.

The computer simulation projected the substation and its appearance from six vantage points. It included the five-year growth of the more than \$700,000 worth of berming and landscaping expected to be spent screening the structure.

Esther Brinkmann of Caleb Wood Drive said the presentation was skewed.

"The selection of the points they chose was intentional to make it look like it won't impact these people. On paper the screening works, but in real life it doesn't," she said.

Residents opposed to the project say they are not only concerned with how the substation will look amid the landscape, but fear the 765-kilovolt lines running into the substation pose a health and safety risk to those living in homes nearby.

The Windsor Knolls meeting was held at the recommendation of the Frederick County Board of Zoning Appeals. On September 29 that board was expected to rule on a request to allow the substation on the agricultural property located on the west side of Bartholows Road at its intersection with Cowman's Manor Drive and West Oak Drive.

The Potomac Edison Company, a subsidiary of Allegheny Energy Inc., has filed an application with the Maryland Public Service Commission seeking authorization to build the PATH project including the Kemptown substation. The same request was made in Virginia.

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