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## Commissioners tour community near proposed substation site

### Hagen: 'Clearly not an appropriate location'

by Christian Brown | Staff Writer

Residents of Bradford Estates and other communities near the site of a proposed 50-acre substation in Mount Airy are looking for any means they can find to halt its approval.

While Allegheny Power, the company that wishes to build the substation, argues that it will be essential to maintain electric service to the region, residents are concerned that it will be a nuisance, a health risk and diminish property values.

Recently, a handful of residents invited the Frederick County Commissioners to visit their community and see the site where the substation will be built. Commissioners Jan H. Gardner (D), David P. Gray, (R), Kai J. Hagen (D), and Charles A. Jenkins (R) accepted the invitation, and toured the community. Commissioner John "Lennie" Thompson (R) was unable to attend.

Hagen said the commissioners were driven to four locations surrounding the Browning Farm, the property on Bartholows Road that Allegheny is purchasing to build the substation.

He said the tour gave him perspective on the nearby location of about 1,300 homes surrounding the farm, and "obviously not the middle of nowhere."

Though the homes are not densely packed in the community, Hagen said a large substation would be a nuisance to residents.

"It's clearly not an appropriate location for this sort of a facility," Hagen said.

The Browning Farm is near the "Kempton Junction," an intersection of two power lines owned by Baltimore Gas & Electric and Pepco, and Allegheny wanted to locate the substation as close to these lines as possible. The company is in a joint venture to build a 275-mile power line, called the Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH), to carry electricity from West Virginia to the proposed Kempton Substation.

The Maryland Public Service Commission, which will be considering the construction of PATH may have ultimate jurisdiction over whether the substation is built.

Residents, who fear the size of the substation, believe that a link between eastern and western power grids could be an attractive target to terrorists, among other concerns.

The tour illustrated the concerns of residents, Gray said. The residents were very even-handed, and "did their homework," when it came to presenting their concerns about the substation, he said. Commissioners had seen the site on maps, but seeing it in the area around the site in person gave a better idea of its magnitude. "It was helpful to see it live," he said.

Gardner wrote in an e-mail to The Gazette that the state government had exclusive jurisdiction over the power lines, but the county commissioners will participate in the hearings just like other citizens will.

"The county commissioners have participated and will continue to participate as an intervener to monitor the process and provide input on behalf of the constituents of Frederick County," Gardner wrote.

She wrote that the substation needs a special exemption approval from the Frederick County Board of Appeals, because it would be built in an agricultural zone, which is not normally used for large-scale substations, and there

would be an advertised public hearing on this matter.

The Frederick County Planning Commission will also review the substation to make sure it is consistent with the county's comprehensive plan, and residents can provide their opinions to that board, as well, she wrote. However, in the legal debate before the PSC, state and federal authority may come to trump local authority, Gardner wrote. Allegheny Power spokesman Todd Meyers wrote that the company was not aware of the tour prior to the date.

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