

**FrederickNewsPost.com****Continued hearing on substation next week**

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A continuation of the hearing on a proposed electric substation near Mount Airy will be held at 7 p.m. Oct. 14 at Winchester Hall.

The initial part of the hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals, held Sept. 29, drew a crowd that not only filled the Winchester Room on the main floor, but also overflowed into a second-floor meeting room.

Attorneys, engineers and other representatives of Potomac Edison and PATH LLC said the substation, to be located off Bartholow's Road, is needed as part of the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline to ensure reliable power and avoid potential blackouts as early as 2015. The project, known as the Kempton Substation, would be roughly the size of two FSK Malls. The utility company is seeking a special exception for the substation.

Opponents say the project is not needed considering the downturn in the economy and outlook for electricity demand. Opponents cite the visual and environmental impact of the proposed substation, its adverse impact on property values and concerns about safety. At the Sept. 29 hearing, Thomas Owens, the county's fire and rescue services director, said local emergency services don't have the equipment to fight what could be a major fire at the substation, especially noting smoke that could spread from the fire into some of the 1,300 homes around the site.

Those who signed up to speak at the Sept. 29 hearing do not have to sign up again.

One point of contention is who has the final say on the substation. Utility company representatives say that as part of the PATH project, a \$2.1 billion, 275-mile transmission line across three states, the substation's approval is under the Maryland Public Service Commission. But county officials say the substation is under county jurisdiction. The county's planning commission unanimously voted against the substation in September, saying the project doesn't fit the comprehensive plan. The issue could eventually end up in court.

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