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### Engineer testifies on substation; new hearing set

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Considering the large number of people who want to testify on the issue of the Kemptown substation, another hearing is already on the calendar.

Lara Roholt Westdorp, chairwoman of the Frederick County Board of Zoning Appeals, said Thursday night the hearing will continue on Nov. 18. Westdorp said the meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m., but could be held earlier and there would be adequate public notice of the exact time.

The main meeting room at Winchester Hall was again filled with residents of the area where Potomac Edison proposes a large electric substation. The facility, described as the size of two Francis Scott Key Malls, would be located off Bartholows Road near Mount Airy.

Potomac Edison and PATH LLC, which are proposing the substation, had its sixth witness testify on Thursday. At a meeting on Sept. 29, the power company had its first five witnesses in a hearing that lasted until 11 p.m.

The witness, William Reed, a civil engineer with Loiderman Soltez Associates, described how the plan for the substation would fit into the agricultural zone it sits in and would be screened from residents with evergreens and berms. Reed said the facility would be built to meet all requirements not only of the county's zoning board and planning commission, but also local and state safety and environmental laws.

Reed said the substation would be compatible with the county's comprehensive plan, but residents who were allowed to question the engineer emphasized that the county planning commission voted in September unanimously that the substation did not fit the comprehensive plan.

Carole Jaar Sepe, a member of the zoning appeals board, questioned Reed on the impact of the substation on wetlands and noted the county's problem with sinkholes. Reed said the geotechnology team on the project would have to answer some of Sepe's questions. He said a well would be made on the property, but only to serve the restrooms at the maintenance building on site. Some trees will be removed on the property, but reforestation will be made along another section of the site.

Reed said farming on the remainder of the property would continue. Ownership of the property will be by PATH Maryland, though Potomac Edison will have responsibility. Opponents of the project have questioned the structure of the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline with Potomac Edison, the recognized electric firm for Allegheny Energy in Maryland, having only a 5 percent stake. PATH LLC, a Delaware-based firm, would hold the remaining stake.

PATH is a \$2.1 billion, 275-mile transmission line that would begin in West Virginia, cross Virginia into Maryland and end at the proposed substation. The Maryland Public Service Commission has authority over the transmission lines. Frederick County officials say they have the final decision on the substation, but utility company representatives disagree and say the state has the authority. The issue could end up in court.

Utility company executives say the line and substation are needed to ensure reliable electric power for the future of the region, with possible blackouts by 2015. Opponents say the line is not needed considering the economic downturn. Residents in the area oppose the substation based on aesthetics, safety, environmental and other factors, including the negative effect on property values.



Photo by Bill Green

A large crowd filled Winchester Hall as the Frederick County Board of Zoning Appeals continued to hear testimony at a hearing Thursday night on the proposed Kemptown Electric Substation. From left are members Carole Jaar Sepe, Lara Roholt Westdorp and Alan E. Duke.

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