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Hearings on transmission highline extended

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A request to change the procedural schedule for the hearings on the Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline was approved Thursday by a hearing examiner for the Maryland Public Service Commission.

A March 2 deadline for written testimony was extended to March 15, according to Dick Ishler, president of the Citizens Against the Kempton Electric Substation (CAKES).

The extended time will allow for PJM Interconnector to provide updated forecasts on the region's need for electricity.

Todd Meyers, a spokesman for Allegheny Energy, said the utility company would review the hearing examiner's decisions and consider its next step.

Hearing Examiner Dennis H. Sober held the hearing in Baltimore to consider the extension at the request of Potomac Edison, the entity that operates in Maryland for Allegheny Energy. The PATH project, a joint effort of Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power, is a 275-mile, \$2.1 billion transmission line beginning in West Virginia, crossing Virginia and ending at a proposed substation near Mount Airy in Maryland.

At Thursday's hearing, Richard McCain, assistant county attorney, argued that authority for siting the proposed substation should be the county's, not the Public Service Commission's.

The utility company has said it believes the PSC had the final say in where the substation can be located.

Doug Kaplan, president of Sugarloaf Conservancy, said about 50 members of CAKES and his organization attended Thursday's hearing.

Ishler said the extension of deadline for testimony "throws out the previous schedule" for the PATH hearings. Kaplan said a hearing will definitely be held in Frederick, but no date has been set. He was disappointed the hearing examiner did not dismiss the PATH project's application.

Kaplan's group and others have argued for alternatives to PATH.

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