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Officials seek info about gas pipeline In a letter, townships ask for meeting to discuss concerns as soon as possible

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WEST VINCENT — Officials from three townships in northern Chester County are asking for more information about a company's plan for a natural gas pipeline.

Supervisors from West Pikeland and East Nantmeal joined West Vincent officials at a Nov. 10 meeting to draft a letter to Dominion, a Virginia-based energy company that wants to build a pipeline to bring natural gas from Green County to Chester County.

Dominion's Pennsylvania Keystone Project would bring natural gas from a compressor station in the Marcellus shale fields in western Pennsylvania 275 miles along an existing utility corridor to a point in Chester County, where it would connect to pipelines operated by Spectra, Williams and NiSource.

West Vincent Supervisors' Chairman Ken Miller said his township thought it would be a good idea for the three townships to join resources to address the pipeline plan. He said he was approached by a Dominion representative about a right of way on his 5-acre parcel.

About 50 residents also attended the Nov. 10 meeting to express their concerns.

"I think the more you send the message that there will be resistance here ... the better we'll be," West Vincent resident Barrie Duffield said. "I don't think you can be too soon in starting the dialogue with Dominion."

West Pikeland Supervisors' Chairman Bob Shemonsky said his township has not heard much information about the proposed pipeline route.

Dominion will be filing an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 2009, according to company spokesman Robert Fulton. Pending federal approval, construction is expected to begin in 2011 with a completion date of 2012, he said.

"I think this pipeline needs to be on the front burner ... because it hasn't been filed yet with FERC ... this is the time to have the dialogue with them," East Nantmeal Supervisor Tyler Wren said.

West Pikeland Supervisor Bill Cracas said it's important to ask Dominion officials why they've chosen this particular route and whether they could consider a route closer to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

"I think it's a great idea to bond together and stop this before it begins," West Pikeland Supervisor Bob Barker said.

West Vincent Township Manager Jim Wendelgass wrote a draft letter regarding this issue to Ramona J. Kanouff, Dominion's senior land agent.

In addition to officials from West Pikeland, East Nantmeal and West Vincent, representatives of environmental and land preservation community, including Green Valleys Association, the Charlestown Township Open Space Commission and French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, and residents

“met to discuss the proposed path of the new high-pressure natural gas pipeline which Dominion is proposing to extend through the townships,” the draft letter says.

“The townships had received a copy of the proposed route through Pennsylvania Senator Andrew Dinniman’s office. The proposed route crosses highly sensitive wetlands, exceptional value streams (as certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources), and cuts through lands preserved from development (some of which were preserved through the use of public funds), a member of Federal historic districts and through or near critical historic resources from the 1700 and 1800s,” the draft letter says.

“The overwhelming sentiment at the meeting was that there must be a most appropriate route for the pipeline to take.”

The townships are requesting a meeting with Dominion officials as soon as possible “to discuss these concerns and to begin a process that would ultimately result in the most appropriate route through northern Chester County,” the letter says.

Dominion has eyed Chester County for the project because of the demand for natural gas, according to Fulton. Dominion officials have not conducted any open house meetings in Chester County yet because they are still reviewing details of the pipeline route, Fulton said.

“In the meantime, prior to the open house, we are open to discussing the pipeline route with officials in the townships,” Fulton said. “We welcome the opportunity to talk with them.”

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