

**Update: Hamilton and Waterford Community Meeting on January 14, 2023**

Mavis and Zebulon Taintor kindly hosted over 80 community members at their barn on Sunday, January 14. Residents of Hamilton Station Road, Waterford, and beyond gathered to learn more about the work being done to halt installation of 500 kV transmission lines through the open spaces of Western Loudoun County. Nextera Energy has proposed a path for the lines that passes through farmland, eased historic properties, a National Historic Landmark, and multiple breweries and wineries. It crosses many streams and creeks and will change the character of Western Loudoun for all time. It is a threat to the citizens of Western Loudoun, the wildlife and environment, and the sanctity of preservation and conservation easements. Nextera Energy will be submitting an application to move forward with this project to the Virginia State Corporation Commission. Timing is uncertain.

The first speaker was Susan Manch, President of the Waterford Foundation Board of Directors. The Waterford Foundation is the steward of the National History Landmark of Waterford, Virginia, a preserved 18th century rural village, historic buildings, and pristine open spaces. Ms. Manch updated the audience on the work the Foundation is doing to fight the lines, discussing meetings and community outreach that have already taken place. She highlighted concerns regarding the sanctity of historic easements should this project be approved. She discussed the goal of partnering with other interested non-profits and businesses to marshal resources and ensure open lines of communication. Ms. Manch shared a four-prong strategic plan that includes legislative and political actions, community engagement, advocacy, and legal action.

Manch highlighted the fact that this is not a local or even a state issue – it is a national issue that should be a part of energy planning at the Federal level.

The next speaker was Russett Perry, Virginia State Senator. Senator Perry noted that she lives in Western Loudoun and said that this issue is one of both personal and legislative interest. She said that she has been working with representatives of the Piedmont Environmental Council to draft legislation in partnership with Senator Danica Roem, who represents part of Prince William County. The legislation would address gaps in the way that localities are approving energy-hungry data centers and require more comprehensive approaches to identifying and addressing energy needs as a part of that process. She also acknowledged that she will also consider legislative language drafted by the next speaker, Tom Donahue. She hopes to get her bill considered during this legislative session. She also noted that she and other legislators are working to ensure that the two open appointments on the Virginia State Corporation Commission are not solely chosen from among energy executives.

The final speaker for the evening was Tom Donahue, activist and electrical engineer. Mr. Donahue began by pointing out that he is not a transmission lines expert. However, he was able to describe the project plan in illuminating detail and propose a possible solution. Mr. Donahue has spent countless hours researching every aspect of this project and has learned that the transmission lines may not be necessary if the regional planning authorities and states are willing to take a more comprehensive view and deploy better technology. He described how the use of composite core conductors would allow for the transmission of twice as much power on lighter weight lines with less loss of power and less sagging. He also explained that while it may be more costly, it costs far less than burying the lines. He noted that Virginia has the opportunity to lead the nation in the application of advanced technologies to enhance the electric grid and meet future power needs for the next 25 years.

Mr. Donahue encouraged attendees to seek help from elected officials and the Governor to bring greater attention to the issue of current and future power needs in the state and beyond and for them to partner with state leaders in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to adopt regional approaches. As he summed it up: **wrong line, wrong place, and wrong technology**.

He also shared that the US Government considers advanced conductor technology, which has been around for 20 years, to be one of the important elements needed to meet national energy goals by 2050. While industry data suggests a new line with this technology might cost roughly 35 percent more, it would provide about double the capacity. Also, industry could put the advanced conductors on existing lines and double their capacity for what appears to be roughly half the cost of a new line. By looking across the entire PJM project for which existing lines within the project are being upgraded or rebuilt and for which most of the new lines are being added to existing rights of way, his analysis indicates that the industry could add the same capacity for power plus considerable resilience. Industry could offset the cost of the advanced conductors by not building additional new lines in new right of ways, while ending up with better performance overall and building infrastructure that is in a better position to accommodate future demands that the PJM plan does not address.

The PJM approach also may not be factoring in the shift in the center point of load demand represented by the recently approved data centers in Prince William County, which will essentially duplicate the power demand that exists today in Loudoun County. Again, he noted that this advanced conductor analysis is preliminary and could be overlooking other issues, such as substation costs. Furthermore, he says that industry is reluctant, without pressure from regulators, to take a risk with anything outside their experience. Although this technology has been used at voltages below 500 kV in the US and was piloted in the US at 500 kV 10 years ago, 500 kV advanced conductors have only been deployed at full scale overseas (Indonesia 2017 and 2018). Our goal should be to get the SCC to consider the performance goals of the overall project (even though the overall project spans 4 states) and require industry to go back and demonstrate that the advanced conductor technology is not a better approach.

Mr. Donahue and Ms. Manch took questions and closed the meeting by discussing next steps. A petition was circulated and Ms. Manch said the Foundation would host an online petition on their website. Upcoming Events:

* The next community meeting will be held on January 22 at Woodgrove High School Auditorium at 6:00 pm, hosted by the Piedmont Environmental Council. For more information, contact <https://www.pecva.org/events/>. Also note the informational video about data centers on this site.
* The National Parks Conservation Association is hosting a “Lobbying Day” on January 31 in Richmond at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 815 East Grace Street from 7:45 am – 1:30 pm. Their goal is to support several bills that are being introduced to require energy efficiency standards, siting restrictions, study impacts, and examining tax credits. For more information, contact <https://www.npca.org/>.
* The Waterford Foundation is convening a meeting of non-profit leadership to map strategy on February 7 at 6:30 pm at the Old School in Waterford. For more information, contact azurfluh@waterfordfoundation.org.

One of the residents is planning to make more street signs protesting the transmission lines, so stay tuned for opportunities to get signs if you would like to have them. If you would like to volunteer to collect signatures in your neighborhood, please contact Abby Zurfluh at azurfluh@waterfordfoundation.org. If you would like to make comments to Nextera, this is the link <https://www.nexteraenergytransmission.com/midatlantic-resiliency-link.html?fbclid=IwAR36AnV0hMTuXgoiBsqpjup7cwUjFUBnhd5F7S3dbda9wTq1fSvLX9chSdY>.