February 21, 2017

VIA EMAIL IN PDF AND EXPRESS DELIVERY

Ms. Julia Wellman
Environmental Impact Review Coordinator
Department of Environmental Quality
629 E. Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project
    DEQ #16-248F
    Docket Nos. CP15-554-000, CP15-554-001, and CP15-555-000
    FERC/EIS-0274D

Dear Ms. Wellman:

As the Mayor of the City of Staunton, located in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia where we treasure our natural resources, I write to affirm the Staunton City Council’s objection overall to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project and lodge a specific objection based upon the threat to a critical water source for our citizens and for Augusta County. We submit that both Dominion and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, as evidenced in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), have utterly failed to account yet for the potentially catastrophic consequences of the project as to the route of the line that would be unacceptably within the ambit of our water source known as Gardner Spring. We believe the huge gas pipeline would cut through the recharge area that is an integral aspect of the Gardner Spring resource that serves both our City and our neighbors in the County, putting all those who rely upon the water in jeopardy.

Please understand that I do not intend this letter to be exhaustive or even comprehensive and certainly not a formal brief in support of the City’s position. I simply highlight aspects that even without a highly sophisticated submission beg for immediate pause and fundamental reconsideration of the DEIS and certainly against any approval. Actually, we ask that the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) demonstrate the
exercise of independent judgment, even against what may be political pressures on your agency otherwise, and we request the DEQ itself lodge with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission strong objection to the project at least as it relates to our water supply. Will you?

Our citizens are fortunate that our predecessor leaders of our City had the foresight to secure for them a vitally important water source referred to as Gardner Spring, which actually is located in neighboring Augusta County. Gardner Spring benefits residents both of our City and of Augusta County. The City initially acquired the rights to Gardner Spring in the 1930s. The precious water from Gardner Spring is processed at our City's water plant and then redistributed through pipelines in our City and into Augusta County to those who depend on it, including individuals and those in important Shenandoah Valley commerce. Our City has invested millions in not only our water plant but also more recently in new water lines that help to serve Augusta County users as well. Gardner Spring provides a majority of the water for our City residents, being capable of offering as much as or more than 5 million gallons of raw water per day for treatment by the City of Staunton, again both for the ultimate benefit of the City and of Augusta County.

The Gardner Spring resource is incontrovertibly priceless and any chance of it being put in jeopardy by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project is actually putting the safety and the welfare of the City of Staunton and Augusta County and their users at risk. From what we can discern (and we are not engineers), nothing in Dominion’s submission and nothing in the DEIS begins to address this critical resource in any meaningful way even though the DEIS acknowledges generally in section 4.1.2.3 potential underground damage because of Karst geology that prevails in our region. As the DEIS states, “Karst terrain is characterized by the presence of sinkholes, caverns, an irregular ‘pinnacled’ bedrock surface, and springs.” Despite seemingly glibly admitting that “[t]hese features could present a hazard to the pipeline both pre- and post-construction due to cave or sinkhole collapse, and can also provide direct conduits from the ground surface to the groundwater, increasing the potential for groundwater contamination,” nowhere is it obvious that Dominion has been required to have done and submitted to you or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission an independent, detailed study and analysis of the potentially momentous adverse consequences for Gardner Spring, a major and critical water supply. It is not obvious to us that anything in the “Construction Impacts and Mitigation” aspects of the DEIS addresses Gardner Spring or, without specific reference by name, even anything similar to this uniquely vital water resource for so many who depend on it daily. If the DEIS includes such a discussion, would you or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission point it out for us and our citizens in order that we may assess it?

We would anticipate that Dominion may attempt to assert that its proposed, huge pipeline does not go directly into the center of Gardner Spring; however, that contention would be illusory at best, because the proposed route is sufficiently near Gardner Spring that the recharge area of Gardner Spring is implicated and quite possibly directly jeopardized.
That recharge area is vital, because the bulk of the water that feeds Gardner Spring comes from an extensive underground aquifer system and network of karst channels that the DEIS has wholly failed to acknowledge, much less analyze. Gardner Spring’s underground paths provide a fairly constant flow, allowing the spring to discharge a steady, reliable resource of critical water. The water, drawing from a large recharge area, is fed by precipitation, which enters the ground, and the water is discharged from Gardner Spring approximately 28 to 45 days later. The recharge contribution area for Gardner Spring may extend as many as five or more miles from Gardner Spring. **Where is that explicitly mentioned at all in the DEIS?**

Based on what we know about a spring water source generally and our own Gardner Spring, we believe that it is essential that any meaningful analysis of the environmental impact must be based on a careful, thorough consideration of the recharge area. Spring recharge areas are, without doubt, recognized to be as vital to the quality of groundwater resources as the center of the spring itself, perhaps more so in ways that are particularly pivotal in this instance. The water quality, without a spring recharge area “can be adversely affected by land uses that allow groundwater contamination to migrate into underlying aquifers.” *Emery & Gardner Groundwater, Inc., Hydrogeologic Investigation of Gardner Spring* (July 2002). Even distant spills can reach Gardner Spring through the Karst aquifer system. As such, the Gardner Spring recharge area is highly susceptible to a wide variety of potential contaminants, and the area should continue to be protected from land uses that even might threaten the quality of the water.

Let me mention another consideration that is revealing about Dominion and this project that Dominion is trying to impose, selfishly for profits, on us and others. Several months ago, a City representative invited Dominion to visit with us and sit down just with our City Council and discuss the project, being mindful of the potentially calamitous implications for Gardner Spring. We could not have really imagined that Dominion would not join us around the table in our Caucus Room. To our surprise and dismay, Dominion arrogantly refused even the courtesy of a meeting discussion, rebuffing our request and invitation. That speaks volumes to us and to our City citizens—and should speak volumes to VDEQ and to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

VDEQ declares that its mission “is to protect and improve the environment for the well-being of all Virginians.” You also promise that “DEQ collaborates . . . to enhance the quality of our environment and to strengthen the role everyone plays in environmental protection.” Will you collaborate with us and our citizens to protect Gardner Spring?

We hope and trust you are listening, even though we realize that some of Virginia’s elected officials appear quite a while ago to have been advocating for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project even well before the issuance of the DEIS. Despite the political muscle visited by Dominion and the pressure, will both VDEQ and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission truly act independently and protect our environment, including our Gardner Spring?
Ms. Julia Wellman  
February 21, 2017  
Page 4

So that you will appreciate perhaps even more the sincerity and consistency of our objection and advocacy now, I also enclose a copy of our City Council’s resolution adopted October 23, 2014. As you and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission know, many others also have objected to or taken issue with the project, which will cut through some of the priceless natural resource treasures in our region and state. We also are keenly mindful, as you should be, that the water coming from Staunton and Augusta County is the headwaters of both the James and Shenandoah rivers and eventually flows into our state’s capital as well as into our nation’s capital. Our City, beyond the reasons stated by many others for objection, objects strongly because its critical water resource now apparently is directly and indirectly implicated by the proposed route reflected in the DEIS.

We ask you to honor that promise and refuse to permit this pipeline project to proceed, advocating similarly with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. At the very least, we urge DEQ and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to insist that Dominion have independent outside professional engineers and other professionals, undertake and complete and publish for comment a detailed study regarding the potential implications for our Gardner Spring water source. Both VDEQ and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission should mandate that Dominion complete and submit its study for public exposure and comment before the process proceeds further. Will you or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission insist that Dominion do so?

We thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s response in the near future. Please provide us with specific responses to our questions and, to use VDEQ’s own words, honor the commitment to “protect and improve the environment for the well-being of all Virginians.” Will you, please do so—through action, not just words, forcing Dominion to respect your mission and the critical interests of Staunton and Augusta County citizens?

Sincerely,

Carolyn W. Dull  
Mayor

cc: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
Members of the Staunton City Council  
Members of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors  
Members of the Board of Directors of the Augusta County Service Authority

Enclosure

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project  
DEQ #16-248F  
Docket Nos. CP15-554-000, CP15-554-001, and CP15-555-000  
FERC/EIS-0274D
RESOLUTION OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
IN OPPOSITION TO ATLANTIC COAST PIPELINE

WHEREAS, Dominion Virginia Power has entered into what the company describes as a joint venture with three other major U.S. energy companies—Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas and AGL Resources—to build and own a natural gas pipeline which will traverse portions of three states, including 11 counties and two cities in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project will pass in close proximity to a public water source and boundary of the City; and

WHEREAS, representatives of Dominion Virginia Power, upon the invitation of City Council of the City of Staunton, Virginia, made a presentation about the project to Council at its meeting on August 28, 2014, held at Robert E. Lee High School to accommodate an overflow audience; and

WHEREAS, reflective of the considerable public interest in the project, dozens of individuals at the meeting, through questions submitted to City Council and comments made during the public comment period, registered their strong opposition to the project, as proposed; and

WHEREAS, members of City Council share many of the concerns expressed by citizens of the City and desire, as a body, to express their opposition to the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Staunton, Virginia, that:

1. Council joins with other localities in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including the counties of Augusta and Nelson, in their expressions of concern about and opposition to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

2. Council opposes the construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and urges Dominion Virginia Power and all others involved to reduce reliance on natural gas and to seek solutions for the 21st century, including conservation and renewable energy such as solar and wind power, that will satisfy future energy needs without imperiling the natural bounty and beauty of our region and the health and safety of our citizens.

3. In the event Dominion Virginia Power and its partners submit an application for construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC"), Council, in the strongest possible terms, urges FERC to withhold approval of the project, on the basis that the natural gas to be transported is not believed to be required to serve the energy needs of Virginia or North Carolina (a significant portion of which can be satisfied by conservation and renewable energy
sources) and, therefore, the pipeline will neither serve the public interest nor satisfy the legal standard of "public convenience and necessity."

4. Council respectfully requests that the Governor of Virginia reconsider his public endorsement of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, and, after consultation with the City of Staunton and other localities that would be impacted by the project and consideration of risks to the environment (including threats to karst environments and water supplies locally in the Shenandoah Valley, elsewhere in the Commonwealth of Virginia and in the District of Columbia and the State of Maryland) and the state's economy (including its agricultural and tourism sectors), oppose the project.

5. Council respectfully requests that Senator Mark Warner, Senator Tim Kaine and Congressman Bob Goodlatte join publicly in opposition to the project, communicate their opposition to FERC and take appropriate action to encourage FERC to withhold approval of the project.

6. In the event Dominion Virginia Power and its partners elect to proceed with the construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, and the project is approved by FERC, Council implores Dominion Virginia Power and its partners to give full consideration to the use of existing utility and highway corridors for the project, so as to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, the impacts of construction, maintenance and operation of the project.

7. Council directs that the Clerk of Council send a copy of this resolution to Dominion Virginia Power, Senator Mark Warner, Senator Tim Kaine, Congressman Bob Goodlatte, Governor Terry McAuliffe and Cheryl A. LaFleur, Chairman of FERC.

Adopted this 23rd day of October, 2014.

Carolyn W. Dull, Mayor

Attest: Linda Little, Clerk of Council