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Governor responds to pipeline questions

‘I support it ... that’s my prerogative’

BY GEOFF HAMILL • STAFF WRITER

ASHWOOD — During his visit to Bath County last Wednesday, Gov. Terry McAuliffe responded to questions from the local media about the proposed Atlantic Coast pipeline.

Allegheny Mountain Radio’s Danny Cardwell asked: “In this area, the pipeline issue has been a hot button topic. What do you say to people who have mixed feelings about the solar project and also the context of the pipelines coming through this area?”

“I don’t know how you can have any consternation about a solar project,” responded McAuliffe. “It’s important for the environment. As it relates to the pipeline, as I’ve always said, first off, it’s not the governor’s office, it’s a FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) permit, and there are several permits it would go through the state. But that’s determined by the General Assembly on the regulations and how they’re defined.

“If someone meets the permits as they’re drawn, then they’re going to get the permit, plain and simple,” the governor continued. “If you don’t like someone for getting the permit, then go back and have the rules re-written by the General Assembly. So, I have to deal with the rules in front of it. I have supported the pipeline. This is going to be a renaissance. It’s going to be thousands of jobs to construct it and then, more importantly, it’s going to allow me and other governors to recruit businesses to come because we’ll bring that cheap natural gas energy in. And if we didn’t have this pipeline, which will be done in the most environmentally safe way – we have 25,000 miles of pipeline today in Virginia, this one will be the most environmentally safe – but if we didn’t have it, we would be bringing this gas in by truck or by rail, which I think is much more dangerous and hazardous to the citizens of the commonwealth of Virginia. So it’s a big job creator, but we are going to make sure that it’s done in the most environmentally sound way.”

The Recorder asked McAuliffe why he strongly endorsed construction of the Atlantic Coast pipeline before his state agencies had an opportunity to study the project.

“I support it as governor and that’s my prerogative as governor,” said McAuliffe. “They’re going to make their decisions. If they come out against it, they’re going to do it, and it goes to my point — I don’t have any say in it. My independent agencies, DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality), are going to make that decision. But I support it. Now, because I support it doesn’t mean it’s going to get approved. It has to go through the regulations, as drafted and written by the General Assembly. DEQ is going to make their decisions. FERC is making their decisions. But clearly, I support it and I’ve actually used it to recruit new businesses to come to Virginia who need that cheap gas.”

The governor ended the question and answer session at that point.