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Supervisors probe pipeline road impact

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BY JOHN BRUCE • STAFF WRITER

MONTEREY — Tuesday, Highland County supervisor Kevin Wagner asked Mike Henry of the Virginia Department of Transportation if he could shed some light on VDOT's ideas about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline and impacts on county roads.

In a related matter, supervisors hired the same consultant they contracted to revise the zoning ordinance to advise on land use and the proposed pipeline.

Wagner wondered if VDOT could help the county decide on land-use permits concerning construction lay-down yards in Monterey and McDowell.

Henry said VDOT views the project as would a property owner. The central office has required Dominion to videotape all the roads to establish a baseline prior to construction, and VDOT has received requests from Dominion concerning proposed lay-down construction yards.

The VDOT permit department has requested data from Dominion to determine if turning lanes are needed. The information was received Friday, Feb. 2, Henry said.

VDOT cannot govern legal weighted vehicles on county roads, but larger vehicles need special permits, he said.

Wagner asked if Route 678 (Bullpasture River Road) was engineered to handle heavy vehicles.

Henry said the road was "certainly not" engineered to the standards of primary highways.

The twisting two-lane road, rife with blind spots, would carry heavy vehicles from western McDowell to pipeline construction sites in northern Bath County.

Henry said VDOT will have to monitor the road's use. "If it becomes an issue, we'll have to handle it internally with Dominion," Henry said.

Following a closed session, supervisors voted on staff recommendation to enter into a contract with Darren Coffey and the Berkley Group LLC for consulting services related to zoning matters and the proposed ACP. The planning commission and supervisors determined it was premature to proceed with a late February public hearing on the Mey rezoning application, so it has been postponed along with Dominion-Neil family land use applications in McDowell. The commission will ratify that decision at its February meeting.