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## Dominion hears earful from county crowd

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VERONA – A majority of the hundreds gathered for Dominion's presentation and question-and-answer session Wednesday remained openly skeptical of company assurances about its study for a natural gas pipeline that would run through Augusta County.

Pastures Supervisor Tracy Pyles excoriated state regulations that allows utility surveyors to enter private property without landowner permission to study for possible permit applications and to ultimately decide on a project like this without local approval.

"Too bad that you guys have used legislation to fix things on your behalf instead of working with the citizens to begin with," said Pyles, who garnered several moments of applause.

Dominion officials made a presentation and answered questions that lasted about 2.5 hours at the Augusta County Board of Superivisors' regula meeting.

The company would work on a case-by-case basis to minimize the impact that a natural gas pipeline would have on private property should the company decide to route a line through the county, representatives said.

The company will be contacting landowners along the corridor the utility giant is surveying for a proposed underground pipeline, which would run for 42.7 miles through Augusta County.

If Dominion decides to move forward with construction and receives the needed permits, the more the company knows about affected properties, the

better workers will be able to cooperate with private landowners, a company official said.

Potential impact to land is one reason the company hasn't decided whether or where to lay a line, said Emmett Toms, manager of state and local affairs.

"The best route has not been determined," Toms said during a presentation before the Augusta County Board of Supervisors. "That's why we're working with the landowners."



South River Supervisor Carolyn Bragg noted that the proposed line runs through some of Augusta's industrial, residential and educational areas. She told company representatives that Dominion's final plan should be more sensitive to Augusta's land-use plan when it determines which route to use.

"I would hope that a lot of consideration would be put into our comprehensive plan – where we see development and future growth and how that would affect that," Bragg said.

Dominion will decide whether to build the line in the next 60 days, depending on how much demand the company can determine from potential customers, officials said.

Officials plan to return to the Government Center next month for an open house with more details about the plan. The company altered its proposed pipeline corridor after consulting with officials with the George Washington National Forest about sensitive species and natural habitats.



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The new proposal would run for 550 miles from West Virginia to North Carolina with a lateral line running to Hampton Roads.

Beverley Manor Supervisor David Karaffa said he was concerned about the study corridor going through areas with important underground aquifers. "Our water resources in Stuarts Draft are precious," Karaffa said.

Sensitivity to natural, cultural and historical resources would be part of the permitting process, primarily through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, company officials said.

The issue of forced sales through eminent domain was raised at several points. If permitted, the company would negotiate land use rights, or easements, with individual property owners along the corridor. Along its current lines, the company has reached voluntary deals to buy easements from landowners 95 percent of the time, Toms said.

Opponents passed out "No Pipeline" stickers mirroring the signs that have been planted since the proposal was made public. Most of the 300-plus inside the board room Wednesday were against the idea.

The proposal, which the company calls the Southeast Reliability Project would bring clean-burning energy from an abundant national source for customers in the three states the line would serve. None of the natural gas transmitted would be for export, said Chet Wade, vice president of corporate communications.

Developing the line would be following a nationwide trend that would help make the country more energy dependent, and the company would make the investment for the long term, Wade said.

"We see nothing on the horizon that will reduce the demand for natural gas," he said