

Elena Schlossberg testimony – 5/2/16

Before I start into my testimony I want to clarify that I am testifying as a private citizen, not as the Executive Director of the Coalition to Protect PWC.

I want to say a special thank you to the Commissioner for making the drive here. As you can see, this is an issue that has raised a lot of issues and concerns within the community. So, I appreciate that you did this.

I wrote this about a year and a half ago and I sent it to Mr. Farrell of Dominion Power.

On one knee, amidst the brush and overgrown trees, vines winding through trees like snakes smothering its prey, my husband proposed to me. It was April 1st, 2000.

He had just purchased this lot on Stormy Drive, a rural area in Prince William County. I loved my husband, but I looked around this property and said "really honey, here? This looks like an Adams family lot!" He smiled, and I, of course said yes, "I will marry you."

Three months later, we had transformed just enough land into a beautiful oasis and we were married on this property, under a tent we celebrated, with stars all around us. Our friends and family thought it was one of the best weddings they had ever attended.

We built our home on this "Adams Family" lot. Within five years, my husband had transformed this overgrown, poison ivy infested, wild rose bush laden, half dead tree lot into his dream oasis. Every summer, although allergic to poison ivy, he would get outside, loppers in hand, and cut every vine, or if need be, take a machete and slice the vine as it coiled itself around the defenseless tree, struggling to survive. Every summer, at the end of each day, he would cover his body with lotion, trying to get rid of the incessant itching from the poison ivy!

And then do you know what he did every freezing winter? Bundled up in layers to stay warm, he would get on his tractor, and he would pull those dead vines and poison ivy, and free each individual tree, bringing life back to this property.

You see Mr. Farrell, this is not just a home with some land, this land, this hard earned oasis is where we LIVE our lives. This is where we plan to grow old, this is where I plan to see my last sunrise, bright orange and fuchsia, rise outside my bedroom window, view unobstructed, if I am to be so lucky.

I have fought for the preservation of the Rural Crescent for 13 years, and my dedication has been unwavering, but now, with the imminent threat to my home and my broader community, I am even more determined than ever that fairness must prevail.

The 1-66 hybrid route is the fair choice for everyone in this community. And if you lived in this community, you could see the level of commitment we have promised to one another in this coalition. I believe you, too, would feel compelled to pick the only acceptable solution to bring Amazon its power. That solution is the 1-66 hybrid option.

I wanted to share my personal story to the SCC, and hope that you can see that we are real people in this community, banding together in hopes that our united voices will make the impact of helping Dominion Power choose the right option.

There are thousands of stories like mine. Each unique, each powerful in its own right. What is Dominion Virginia Power willing to sacrifice from our community to feed the needs of one? Is it to serve our wounded warriors, who deserve to have a — among the Bull Run? The seniors at Heritage Hunt who worked their entire lives to have peace within their retirement community?

Whether we live on the New Road route, Northern alternative, Western alternative, in the town of Haymarket, Somerset Crossing, Green Hill Crossing, Crossroads Village, Piedmont, Heathcote Commons, Villages of Piedmont, Haymarket station or along any other road that is impacted, as a community, we are all affected.

No community should be asked to bear the brunt of such overwhelming destruction when there is a viable alternative, 1-66 and buried.

So, I wrote this eighteen months ago, and here is what I have learned. There are some fights that require more than we ever anticipated we could give. People in this community have expended thousands of hours. We have sacrificed time with our families, we have given up time at work.

Some of us sacrificed some of our health for this. But throughout this experience, what I can say is I have gained new friendships, and for that I am thankful. And I will say that when you talk about building alliances, my new best friend. Bob Marshall, somebody wanted to get a picture of us hugging and what they said was hell has indeed frozen over.

We have come together because this is a matter of justice and fairness and I cannot express to you enough my outrage that Jeff Bezos refuses to address this community. He hides behind Amazon. He hides behind VADData. We all know it's him. He is like the emperor with no clothes.

We deserve to have our concerns addressed and what is happening here is an injustice of epic magnitude. You have people that work every day. Their home is their equity. That's all they

have. So, when we look at someone making billions hand over fist refusing to come to the table, we say enough. And what we need you to do is look at this case in its unique light and we need you to make the right decision. Thank you.