**Bull Run Observer: Supervisors want neither Railroad nor Carver Rd. power line location**

EDITOR’S NOTE:  The June 2 edition of the Bull Run Observer had already gone to press when on June 1, Prince William Board of County Supervisors held a public hearing on the State Corporation Commission’s proposal that the board lift open space and easement restrictions to facilitate power line construction in Haymarket.  Here is a summary of the June 1 meeting of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors.

By Terri L. Erwin-Fitz

With the Virginia State Corporation Commission’s interim decision on April 1 for Dominion Energy to request Prince William County’s Board of Supervisors to allow the power company to place transmission lines along the Railroad Route that would require the Board of County Supervisors to go against the county’s Open Space and Easement restrictions.  And if the easement were not granted, the transmission lines would be built along the Carver Road Route, a historic community.

During the consideration discussion of the request by Dominion Energy to lift the restrictions in the county’s open space easement on June 1 and though many citizens spoke to the preference of the I-66 underground route, many residents pleaded the case for their own community with much passion and heart.

During citizens’ time, Haymarket resident Bob Weir pointed out that Prince William County, Amazon and Dominion Energy are equally responsible for the situation.

Weir said that new information indicated that the additional infrastructure was only needed if out of the three buildings planned only the first two are up and running.  He charged the Board of Supervisors to not “acquiesce” to the SCC, but stand firm with this new information and put a stop to the action.  He told the Board to ask around, residents like himself and others have more information that they can provide them with.

Rhonda Reese, who lives along the Railroad Route in the Greenhill Crossing community, called the decision on where the power line would go – a moral issue – an issue of fairness.  She added that residents of the community have given the Board of County Supervisors their trust.

She went on to say that people across the country are watching and charged the supervisors to serve their constituents and to be an example.

She expressed concern for those on the railroad route and those along Carver Road who have been there for generations.

Many residents who would be affected by the Railroad Route spoke to the supervisors about not removing the legal obstacles that will protect their properties.

Nathan Grayson, who lives on Carver Road, noted that most citizens remarked on how the project will affect their property, but this project will go right through the middle of his home – a home he said he has lived in for 51 years and which has been in the same location for more than 70 years.

Grayson said it is a home that he was raised in, inherited it, and where he is raising his own family.

He says that no one who will be directly affected has been directly spoken to – not by Dominion Energy or by the County.

Amazon, he asserted, is only doing damage to the community.  He pleaded with the supervisors spoke of neighbors who will be in “crosshairs of the project”  including Rosie Thomas, Charlie More and others who have lived in the community for years.

He said that he is upset that his history, his property that he has worked so hard for is up for discussion by a Board of Supervisors “who has never spoken to those who will be directly affected.”

Grayson says he has friends who work for Dominion Energy and they have said this does not have to happen, but it comes down to money.

E.J. Scott with the Prince William County NAACP expressed major concern in the damage to the historical assets of the African American community if the route is run through the Carver Road community, noting that this land has been passed down for generations.

Scott added at the end of the meeting that the route would come close to Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church and family cemeteries along the route.

Karen Sheehan with the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, shared that she is not personally affected by the two routes selected by the SCC, but says that stopping this project has become a huge part of her life for the past four years, ensuring emails to the Board of County Supervisors’ members, communicating to Dominion, SCC and Amazon and updating the Coalition website.

Sheehan pressed the board to become involved as she said Dominion has “trampled” on the community and that the project is “wrong” in that it has not been established as needed.

She asked the Board to look out for the community and “not play SCC’s game” calling it “Sophie’s Choice” pitting one neighborhood against another.

Gainesville District Supervisor Pete Candland, said he was concerned that there have been many changes in the reasons for the need for this project throughout the process.  He suggested that the board may have thought that the “lights would go out” in Haymarket without the project, and stated his belief that this process is due to “economic speculation.”

Brentsville District Supervisor Jeanine Lawson reminded citizens that Steward, Candland and herself have been on record supporting the I-66 route and that she personally testified in Richmond and raised concerns about the “historical resources” in the Railroad and Carver Road Routes.

Corey Stewart, chairman of the Board of County Supervisors, read a statement, that the Board resolved to deny removing legal constraints to lifting easements for the Railroad Route, the Board also included a “whereas clause” in which the board also opposes the Railroad Route and the Carver Route indicated in the SCC’s interim decision.  The resolution also reaffirmed that the Board supports only the I-66 route.

Stewart added the Board would fight for the citizens and would not allow the SCC or Dominion Energy divide the county against one another.