

NJ legislators praise BPU decision to schedule another pipeline hearing

By David Levinsky Staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, August 4, 2015 2:15 pm

TRENTON — State lawmakers are applauding the state Board of Public Utilities' decision to schedule another public hearing on New Jersey Natural Gas' proposed 28-mile transmission line through northern Burlington, Monmouth and Ocean counties.

The additional hearing will be held at 6 p.m. Aug. 26 at the Enterprise Center at Rowan College at Burlington County on Route 38 in Mount Laurel.

An official notice advertising the hearing date was published in the Burlington County Times on Tuesday.

The hearing will be the third public meeting on the controversial project, called the Southern Reliability Link. Over 200 people attended the first two hearings on July 28 at the Manchester Township Municipal Building in Ocean County, which is at the tail end of the proposed pipeline.

The high-pressure pipeline is proposed to run from Chesterfield through North Hanover, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and several Monmouth and Ocean county towns, before connecting with New Jersey Natural Gas' system in Manchester. It would provide a second major transmission feed to the company's service area, which supporters claim is needed to ensure reliability and resiliency.

Opponents are critical of the proposed route, which runs close to several homes along Route 528 in Chesterfield and North Hanover, and environmental groups want the project scrapped because it supports hydraulic drilling, called "fracking," in Pennsylvania, and because it is proposed to run through part of the Pinelands Reserve.

Because of the controversy surrounding the proposal, state Sen. Dawn Marie Addiego and Assembly members Chris J. Brown and Maria Rodriguez-Gregg had urged the BPU to schedule an additional hearing in Burlington County to give area residents another opportunity to testify on the project.

The announcement that a third hearing was scheduled drew praise from the three 8th District



State Sen. Dawn Marie represents the 8th District.

Republicans.

“The BPU’s decision gives the people of Burlington County the opportunity to ensure their message is heard loud and clear: An alternative pipeline route must be implemented, and the company’s bottom line does not trump the public’s interest,” Addiego said in a statement.

Brown and Rodriguez-Gregg said the extra hearing ensures additional transparency and public input in the proceedings.

“The pipeline is an important project that has many potential benefits for our community, like job creation and improved reliability for customers. However, those benefits do not outweigh the need for public oversight and transparency, a sentiment reflected in the BPU’s decision,” Brown said.

“The announcement is welcome news for all of those that would be impacted by the pipeline route. My colleagues and I applaud Commissioner (Dianne) Solomon’s decision to give Burlington County citizens the opportunity to have their voices heard,” Rodriguez-Gregg added.

Residents who cannot attend the final hearing can send written comments to the Board of Public Utilities, 44 S. Clinton Ave., Ninth Floor, P.O. Box 350, Trenton, N.J. 08625-0350.