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Area town administrators discuss pipeline

Issues: Damage to wells and ptic systems, eminent domain, oximity to homes and safety orries are among the concerns iced by residents.

By KATHLEEN BAGLIO HUMPHREYS
Union Leader Correspondent

BROOKLINE — Town administrators nd selectmen from several com-unities affected by the natural s pipeline proposed by Kinder organ met with a representative from the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) Tuesday at Brookline Town Hall.

Brookline, Milford, Mason, Litchfield, Pelham and Rindge were represented at the meeting, while Amherst plans to attend a future meeting.

Brookline Town Administrator Tad Putney reached out to the 16 other communities affected by Kinder Morgan's proposed route. "The first meeting was (to) see where the different communities were in their thinking and decisions, and decide on a path forward," said Putney.

The meeting of officials from the various communities came after Milford selectmen heard from about 75 concerned residents on Monday night. On Monday, the Mliford Board of Selectmen voted to establish a task force to address issues concerning the proposed high-pressure gas pipeline.

Residents clapped in approval at the vote, which came after six homeowners of the Federal Hill section of town gave a PowerPoint presentation.

Their concerns include proximity to residences, damage to wells and septic systems, threat of eminent domain, land use restrictions, easement taxation, disruption of quality of life and Kinder Morgan's previous construction and safety record.

If the worst happens and there is an explosion, resident Jeff Wells said, there is the "incineration zone" to consider. Wells said that Kinder Morgan didn't bring this point up at its meeting with the board on Jan. 5.

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"Even if you can get back to your home, it will eventually ignite due to the intensity of the heat," Wells said.

One message stressed during the Milford meeting was that the gas will not be distributed locally.

"Kinder Morgan is only here because Massachusetts was a problem, and it's easier to go through us to get to the station in Dracut," resident Mark Stec said. "They only want to get their product from point A to B, and we need a strong chain of people and towns to keep them out."

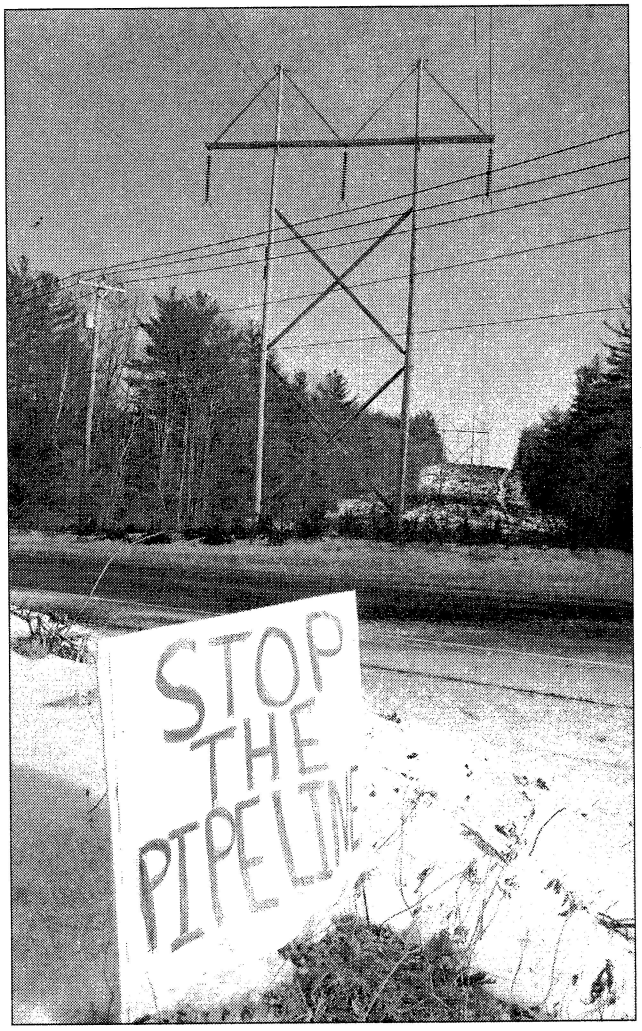
The group's research indicated that Kinder Morgan would need a compressor station 15 times larger than stated. The compressor station pumps the gas through the pipe.

Board members praised residents for the presentation. Chairman Gary Daniels said he is eager to gather information, and will attend Kinder Morgan's open house on Jan. 27 at Hampshire Hills from 5 to 8 p.m.

"What will win this is fact, figures — not opinions," Milford Selectman Kathy Bauer said.

The residents of some towns, such as Rindge, are still unclear what their residents want, while the residents of Mason and Milford have loudly voiced their opposition to the pipeline.

"Many people in Milford are in the information-gathering stage," said Mark Bender, Milford Town Administrator. "You can learn a lot when you listen to both sides."



The PSNH power lines along the Brookline/Milford border are part of the proposed Kinder Morgan high-pressure gas pipeline route. A sign shows one person's opinion.

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"We still have the opportunity to argue at the FERC level that the capacity far outweighs the need," said Mason Board of Selectmen Chairman Charlie Moser.

"We want the least impact to our town," added Moser.

Mason will have two warrant articles in March asking voters if they want to authorize selectmen to oppose the pipeline, then to mandate money to work toward that goal.

To date, Brookline has a commitment letter from an appraisal firm to review six parcels, 160 acres, of town-owned land that could be affected, and looking at environmental resources and potential legal representation.

"There is value in what we are doing here," said Pelham Town Administrator Brian McCarthy. "Collectivel,y we can get this done."

Putney suggested various towns tackle an aspect they can handle, and bring experts to future meetings. They said they plan to tap into the success Hollis had in stopping the pipeline by looking at that town's strategy and resources.

Pelham business owners want natural gas, and the town is trying to get water and natural gas for businesses, schools and town hall. The town currently has a 24-inch natural gas pipeline, and was promised a pump station during past construction that never materialized. "They are not coming through town (to) drop a high-velocity pipe unless we have a faucet," said McCarthy. "If we can't stop it, we need to have some benefit from it."

Eight of NRPC's 13 communities will be impacted.

"A subcommittee will be made up from these towns," and Selectman Kermit Williams from Wilton will head up the subcommittee, said Nashua Regional Planning Commission member Sara Siskavich.

A second meeting is planned for Feb. 3 at 9 a.m. in Brookline.

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