

Springfield hires lawyer to fight PPL

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Springfield Township has taken the next step in moving forward in opposition to PPL's preferred transmission line and substation route through the township.

The supervisors voted unanimously on March 11 to hire advisory counsel to represent them before the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission in Harrisburg. Attorney Scott Rubin from Bloomsburg will be representing the township at \$175 per hour. The commission is scheduled to start with the first part of the hearing on May 14.

Supervisor Rob Zisko was concerned over the expense the township faces as it goes up against the utility giant.

Chairperson Jim Brownlow acknowledged that the township was unsure of anticipated costs, but assured that the township would be monitoring the costs as it went along.

"We just need to get more answers than we have gotten to date," Brownlow said. "This unfortunately, is the only way we are going to get them. We've been almost forced into doing this, from our perspective."

Township Manager Rich Schilling explained that a staff member from Richland Township's solicitor's office had confirmed that Richland has filed the paperwork to save its seat at the table before the PUC.

Schilling explained that under the board's direction, he sent letters to the municipalities of Coopersburg Borough and Richland and Upper Saucon townships, and the Bucks County Commissioners.

Schilling explained that he had tentative discussions with the township's managers. Pointing out that managers are not the governing authority, Schilling said that Coopersburg and Upper Saucon Township managers did not have a problem with the PPL's proposed power line route. In the letters, Springfield supervisors asked if the

municipalities would consider the plans as an agenda item so that their residents can weigh in on the issues.

Richland Township resident Francine Schmitt said she feels the proposed line from Quakertown to Coopersburg is only a small part of what is to come. She voiced concern that PPL might connect to the federal line coming from Virginia and to the grid station to be built on Old Plains Road in Upper Milford Township.

PPL has acquired approximately 85 acres on Hickon Road in Springfield Township to build a 6-acre substation.

"I think it is the supervisors' major concern that this looks like it's the tip of the iceberg," said Schilling.

Springfield resident Bruce Whitesell announced that a citizen's group, Springfield Bucks PPL, has been formed. The purpose of the group is to interact with the citizens of the township and to raise money and public awareness. The group's web site, springfieldbuckspp.com, should be up and running by the third week of March, Whitesell said.

Dennis Steskal, also a township resident, commented that he was proud of the board for standing up for its citizens against PPL's "steam-rolling the township."

"It is too bad the neighboring townships don't understand the implications and precedence that could be set by allowing this power company to dictate to our citizens what they are allowed to do," said Steskal.

"One thing I think that needs to be said is that the supervisors do not have a problem with PPL running the line through Springfield Township," stated Schilling. "It's where the line is being proposed. We have an industrial area that's right adjacent to it where they could run it, and that is where we would prefer that they do it."

The supervisors' next meeting is 7:30 p.m. March 25, at the Municipal Building on Township Road.