

Coal and Energy Commission  
Special Subcommittee on Energy Policy  
November 28, 2005, Richmond

The Special Subcommittee on Energy Policy met in Richmond to continue discussing Senator Frank Wagner's proposed energy legislation and, more generally, Virginia's energy supply outlook.

Cody Walker, of the State Corporation Commission, briefed the subcommittee on the existing pipeline infrastructure in Virginia, as well as the process for expanding this infrastructure. If offshore development were to be allowed, some expansion would be necessary. There was agreement among the subcommittee members that right of way issues would be critical to any future expansion project. While pipeline is often located within existing rights of way, due to space constraints this might not always be feasible.

Arlen Bolstad, also of the SCC, next detailed how Senator Wagner's proposed energy legislation might be implemented. Mr. Bolstad focused on Chapter nine, which provides for the designation of optimal low-emission energy facility sites. He noted that this legislation would create a shift in policy; whereas the Commission normally waits for developers to come forward with a specific parcel of land in mind, now the Commission would be evaluating land areas that may never actually be developed. He also noted that the Commission does not currently have enough staff with the technical expertise necessary to complete the required investigations, and outside consultants would be needed. It is unclear who would pay for these services. Another potential problem with implementation is that it would require voluntary collaboration with several federal agencies. Since no other state has enacted similar legislation, it is unclear how much cooperation could be expected. The chief advantage of this legislation is that an optimal site designation would make the site exempt from local land use plans and zoning ordinances.

Bruce McKay, Manager of Federal Policy of Dominion, spoke about federal Congressional action affecting offshore energy exploration. Mr. McKay stated that one of the problems with drafting this type of legislation at the federal level is that there is currently no state agency for lawmakers to consult with. Senator John Watkins, chairman of the subcommittee, expressed interest in potentially becoming involved in this process.

The next meeting of the subcommittee is scheduled for December 15th at 2:00. Senator Watkins asked the subcommittee members, as well as any interested citizens, to prepare comments and suggestions for Senator Wagner's proposed legislation. Senator Wagner expressed particular interest in suggestions dealing with energy conservation. Time will also be allowed for public comment on the proposed legislation.

The Honorable John C. Watkins, Chairman  
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