

Baltimore County bans liquid gas pipeline surveyors

Jaime Malarkey, The Examiner
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Baltimore County -

Baltimore County officials said they denied surveyors from a company attempting to build a liquid natural gas terminal and pipeline at the Sparrows Point Shipyard access to government-owned property.

The surveyors need entrance to county land to plan for an 87-mile pipeline that would transport the gas through Baltimore and Harford counties, said Bart Fisher, an attorney representing a Dundalk-based plant opposition group.

This move is the latest in an aggressive effort to block the plans of energy companies AES Corp. and Mid-Atlantic Express LLC, which is leading the pipeline work.

“The county executive is adamantly opposed to this project, and we’re not about to do anything to facilitate it moving forward,” county spokesman Don Mohler said.

Also this week, the LNG Opposition Team asked U.S. Attorney Rod Rosenstein to join Gov. Robert Ehrlich, Baltimore City Mayor Martin O’Malley, Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith and other local officials in their vocal fight against the terminal, which they say poses environmental and safety threats.

Fisher sent Rosenstein a letter earlier this week, saying the terminal and dredging it would violate a 1998 consent decree obtained by the federal court’s Maryland district mandating an environmental cleanup at the shipyard.

“They claim they’re exempt,” Fisher said. “We have no evidence of an amendment or waiver that would exempt them from this.”

Vickie LeDuc, a spokeswoman for the U.S. attorney’s Maryland office, said, like all requests for action, the office will determine if there is sufficient evidence to comply.

AES officials said last week that they are reviewing their legal options in response to a new County Council law banning LNG plants within five miles of a residential area.

“We’re going to keep trying,” AES Sparrows Point project manager Kent Morton said. “There’s a lot of benefits out there that people have not focused on yet. We’re in an election year.”

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ultimately will approve or deny AES’ proposal.

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