

County panel stops short of opposing power line projects http://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/article_27e185ae-ee38-11e0-8faf-001cc4c002e0.html

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A La Crosse County committee wants a state study on two proposed high-voltage transmission line projects in the region but stripped stronger language against the plans from a draft resolution Monday.

Several members of the Planning, Resources and Development Committee said they didn't have enough information for now to endorse coming out against the CapX2020 line.

That was even after hearing both from a CapX2020 representative and opponents of the \$450 million, 345-kilovolt transmission line.

The CapX2020 line would extend about 150 miles from Hampton, Minn., to the La Crosse area, crossing the Mississippi River at Alma and ending at a new substation near Holmen. Construction would begin in 2013, with the line in service by 2015.

The project would upgrade an outdated system and help meet the increasing demands for power, plus channel wind farm electricity, said Tim Carlsgaard, a spokesman for CapX2020, a consortium of Xcel Energy, La Crosse-based Dairyland Power Cooperative and nine other utilities in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa and Wisconsin.

He called Supervisor Marilyn Pedretti's resolution opposing the plan "premature," considering the Wisconsin Public Service Commission has yet to have public hearings on its application.

"At least let the process work for itself," Carlsgaard said.

But about a dozen members of the audience spoke against the plan and another proposed 150-mile line by American Transmission Co. to Dane County, saying it could harm their health, property values, the environment, local tourism and the economy.

Both sides cited studies supporting or rejecting the idea that electromagnetic fields, or EMFs, from overhead transmission lines can cause cancer and other serious health issues.

That left Supervisor Tina Wehrs questioning whether either had the definitive answers. While pushing to take out language in Pedretti's resolutions that referred to health concerns, Wehrs did endorse asking the PSC to study the EMF issue.

Pedretti said after the meeting she was disappointed with the changes but added, "at least they're hearing it and asking the questions."

The county doesn't have the power to actually prevent the project. But its opposition could factor into the PSC's decision on the lines, Pedretti said.

The board for town of Holland, where Pedretti is clerk, in August unanimously came out against the proposed lines, she said.

Pedretti's draft CapX2020 and ATC resolutions now go to the county's Legislative Committee for revisions.