

Holmen weighs in on CapX2020

Author: [Jenna Troum](#), Reporter, jtroum@wkbt.com

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CapX2020

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HOLMEN, Wis. -- Flipping on a light switch is something we do every day. But how often do we think about where that electricity comes from?

That's at the center of the debate in Holmen, where residents had a chance to speak out Monday night on the controversial CapX2020 power line project.

The proposed project would put up about 150-miles of power lines, some of which would [run through La Crosse County](#). Those lines would come to an end at a substation in Holmen.

There's just no way around it. The CapX2020 power lines would be really tall. It's a project that would replace poles that are 80- to 90-feet high with poles that are 150-feet high.

But CapX2020 spokesperson Tim Carlsgaard said there are things they can do to make it seem like less of an issue.

"We can space them a little bit farther apart so there won't be as many. Also the existing structures are two poles. These will be one pole. We will provide people who are burdened with these structures on their land-- they will get paid for that," said Carlsgaard.

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But Irv Balto, a spokesperson for the Citizens Energy Task Force, which opposes the project, says that's just not good enough.

"What if I live across the street and I have to view this line at the end of my driveway? I'm going to get nothing," said Balto.

If approved, the project comes with a half-a-billion-dollar price tag.

But Carlsgaard said it's necessary to meet growing energy demand.

"People are using more electricity in their homes, whether it's the big screen TV or the air conditioning.... Everybody uses electricity all the time. We have to make sure that they have that," said Carlsgaard.

On top of concerns over property values and environmental problems, Balto said the project would also cause communities to fight each other over where the power lines would go.

"People organize to say, 'Don't put it in our neighborhood or our backyard. Put it someplace else.' And so what happens is communities are pitted against communities, fighting over where the line goes, rather than people in communities uniting together to get what they really want, which is not having the transmission line," said Balto.

The State Public Service Commission has the final say on if and where the transmission lines can be built. The commission plans to hold the following public hearings in March:

Tues., March 13 at 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. - American Legion in Alma

Wed., March 14 at 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. - Centerville Community Center

The Holmen School Board and the La Crosse County Board have already passed resolutions opposing the CapX2020 project.