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News

Locals protest sewer interceptor line with nature walk

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LOWER PROVIDENCE — A “nature walk with a purpose” Friday afternoon along the forested bank of the Perkiomen Creek attracted township officials, two state legislators and about 75 Lower Providence residents who are opposed to the construction of a sewer interceptor line in 2013 and 2014.

Absent from the event were nearly all the members of the LPVRS (Lower Perkiomen Valley Regional Sewer Authority) who proposed building the “middle” section of the Perkiomen Creek Interceptor Project, which will run about 18,000 linear feet from the confluence of the Skippack and Perkiomen creeks up to the Collegeville Inn on Ridge Pike.

“The LPVRS declined to come,” said Lower Providence Township Manager Joseph Dunbar. “I got an e-mail at 12:37 p.m. from (LPVRS Manager) Barbara Cepko.”

The only member of the LPVRS to attend the event was Fred Walker, the Lower Providence member of the LPVRS and chairman of the Lower Providence Township Sewer Authority.

Walker addressed the group at Hoy Park before the group took a path through the woods that had been blazed by volunteers for the event.

“It’s a very important issue for this community. The issue is the sitting of a sewer line on this side of the stream,” Walker said. “Currently the existing interceptor is on the other side. The proposed route goes through a neighborhood. The line would create a 70-foot-wide scar on the neighborhood.”

Walker said an Indian find in the proposed path of the interceptor was “a big issue that could hold this up.

“Our goal is to show it is not a good option,” Walker said. “This is virgin land. It’s a neighborhood.”

State Sen. John Rafferty, R-44th Dist., state Rep. Mike Vereb, R-150th Dist., Lower Providence Supervisors’ Chairman Richard Brown, Supervisors Marie Altieri and Colleen Eckman, Upper Providence Township Manager George Waterman and Upper Providence Assistant Manager Lee Milligan made up the official part of the walking contingent.

“We’re going to take a good look at this,” said Rafferty after the tour concluded near resident Catherine Beyer’s house. “Somewhere along the line we will meet with the regional sewer authority to see about this.”

Beyer, an energetic organizer against the interceptor, was enthusiastic in thanking the walk participants and volunteers.

“I would like to thank Sen. Rafferty and state Rep. Mike Vereb whose names and reputations alone evoke respect and

reverence," Beyer said. "Just having their attendance here today has validated our cause and given us hope.

"Jesus said, 'If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that you ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven,'" Beyer continued. "So I am here today to declare that there are more than two of us who agree — this sewer should not go through our neighborhood."

The authority has a 36- to 55-inch diameter sewer interceptor in operation that begins above Graterford Road in Perkiomen and runs by gravity down to the treatment plant in Oaks behind the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center. Projected increases in sewer demand dating back to 2001 inspired the LPVRS to double the capacity of the existing interceptor by building a second interceptor.

The authority has already built the "lower" section of the second interceptor, from the confluence of the Skippack and Perkiomen creeks down to the treatment plant, a distance of 1,450 linear feet. The "upper" 20,000-linear-foot section of the second interceptor, from above Graterford Road down to the Collegeville Inn, will be built in 2010 and 2011.

Dan Smith of Lower Providence uses the Perkiomen Creek to kayak "every weekend."

"You get on the creek and you go back in time," Smith said. "The sewer line would ruin the recreation. It will destroy the woods."

Jean Regar, a Lower Providence resident and member of the Lower Providence Concerned Citizens, wants more study and investigation before digging begins.

"We want a complete study done of the ecological impacts," Regar said. "A lot of this is undisturbed wetlands."

Douglas Light of Upper Frederick, Beyer's son, spent years exploring the woods around his parents' home.

"We are continuing to enjoy what we get from this land," Light said. "We don't want to destroy what we have."

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