

Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

Town of Clinton
Clinton Concerned Citizens
Columbia Land Conservancy
Dutchess County Government
Dutchess Land Conservancy
Town of Claverack

Farmers and Families for Claverack
Town of Livingston
Farmers and Families for Livingston
Town of Milan
The Olana Partnership
Omega Institute

Pleasant Valley Concerned Citizens
Preservation League of New York State
Scenic Hudson
Town of Pleasant Valley
Walnut Grove Farm
Winnakee Land Trust

The HVSEC is a broad-based collaboration of community groups and officials partnered with Scenic Hudson to advocate for strategies that will strengthen the state electric grid without damaging Hudson Valley ratepayers and key assets. See our Supporting Organizations at www.hvsec.org/supporting-organizations.

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Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition Reaffirms Commitment to New York State Residents

Coalition Continues Mission to Inform and Represent Utility Customers in Proceeding

HUDSON VALLEY— The Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition (HVSEC) in 2015, after a lengthy legal and public relations campaign, gained significant concessions from the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) and developers regarding their proposed \$1 billion transmission project, securing promises that the work would be done without the use of eminent domain and that potential towers would conform to the existing right-of-way in both width and height. While these concessions are important, they are merely promises which have not been codified into any law or statute, and thus should receive our continued vigilance.

HVSEC also presented evidence during the proceeding that demonstrated these transmission upgrades failed a basic cost-benefit analysis and were not needed, but the PSC sidestepped the debate by qualifying the projects as necessary based on public policy needs, a rarely-used procedural tactic that is subjective in nature. Now, the project continues and HVSEC remains committed to keeping a close eye on the next phase and informing the public of all new developments.

The “wins” for Hudson Valley residents

The HVSEC and citizens who joined its campaign produced compelling scientific and technical findings that led the PSC to transform its regulatory framework for the project. One early success was persuading the agency to incorporate Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s preference for lines within existing, rather than new, rights-of-way. Expert reports commissioned by the HVSEC on the project’s negative visual and environmental impacts led the PSC to eliminate design options that posed more serious threats.

Despite these victories, there are no guarantees transmission lines will be built to this standard. The process is far from over and warrants continued monitoring to ensure these hard-fought wins are not eroded.

HVSEC and the PSC have agreed to disagree

Since its inception, HVSEC has advocated that need should be established prior to moving forward with the project – a different order of operations than the PSC’s preferred approach.

Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

To help contribute to the general record available to all stakeholders in the proceeding, HVSEC was awarded intervenor funding for specific quantitative research completed by energy experts and scientists.

Research delivered by these independent scientists and professionals that there is no need for additional overhead transmission lines, particularly given the established decline in electricity usage over the past five years, and projected declines for the future. HVSEC made the case that \$1+ billions of ratepayer money would be better spent on projects with tangible benefits.

The PSC disagreed, and is proceeding with the project based on “public policy justifications.” The public policy process and justification is another new process for NYS. HVSEC looks forward to participating actively in this new phase.

“We are very pleased,” said Greg Quinn, spokesman for HVSEC, “that in 2016 the New York Public Service Commission publicly recognized that this project could feasibly be constructed inside existing energy corridors. We feel that without the Coalition’s intervention this recognition would not have happened. This policy, if followed, eliminates the threat of eminent domain. But final decisions about routes are not likely to be made for at least three years. HVSEC is absolutely committed to watch-dog the process, making every effort to assure that eminent domain and the prospect of ruined landscapes do not reappear.”

The decision to proceed with the project based on public policy justifications “...is disappointing,” said Quinn, “but it does not change our mission and our commitment to provide the opportunity for residents and stakeholders to participate in the process. This participation is essential to ensure appropriate oversight of government agencies and private developers as they create new processes and decide how much money New York State residents will pay.”

The Coalition will continue to facilitate efforts to build and maintain a superior, efficient, modern grid. “We want to bring people together around one table to share, educate, and create common ground,” said Quinn.

About the Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

The Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition includes municipal officials; environmental, cultural, historic and land preservation organizations; businesses; and residents who support creation of a modern, comprehensive energy plan for the Hudson Valley and New York State. The HVSEC was formed in 2014 to advocate for constituents and stakeholders impacted by the new high voltage overhead transmission lines proposed by the NYS PSC. The Coalition has worked for over three years to address five primary issues:

- Threat of eminent domain, resulting in loss of homes and livelihoods
- Loss of historic, scenic, agricultural, and natural resources in the Hudson Valley, threatening economic health
- Lack of evidence of actual need for new overhead transmission lines
- Driving up the cost of electric supply in a State with some of the highest electric pricing in the nation, with limited associated benefits.
- Reliance on 19th century energy solutions instead of 21st century innovation

More information is available at www.hvsec.org.