

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORT

2015 Legislative Session

Reference No.: CB-003-2015

Draft No.: 1

Committee: PLANNING, ZONING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Date: February 18, 2015

Action: FAV

REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable, 5-0 (In favor: Council Members Harrison, Davis, Glaros, Taveras, and Toles)

Council staff summarized the purpose of the legislation and informed the Committee of written referral comments that were received. Council Member Turner, the bill's sponsor, indicated that he sponsored CB-3-2015 to ensure safety at public utility substations. Mr. Turner explained that legislation enacted in 2009 banned the use of stranded barbed and/or razor wire on fences and walls except on agricultural land and CB-3-2015 allows public utility companies to use these materials at substations as a means to protect the grid facilities. Mr. Turner also informed the Committee that he was contacted by citizen groups regarding their concern that the legislation could apply to transmission lines and affect citizens' recreational use of trails along these transmission lines. It was suggested that CB-3-2015 include wording that that the usage of barbed and/or razor wire not be used to deter certain recreational public access on utility rights-of-ways.

Mr. Jerry Pasternak, Pepco Vice President, and Mr. Michael Fowler, BGE External Affairs Manager, submitted correspondence and also testified in support of the legislation. Mr. Pasternak explained that protecting the grid as well as human life is a shared responsibility. In addition, Mr. Pasternak commented that the utility companies do not intend to block access to trails or place fencing along high power transmission lines. Mr. Fowler commented that the legislation will facilitate the use of barbed and/or razor wire around equipment that has exposed access.

The Office of Law reviewed CB-3-2015 and found it to be in proper legislative form with no legal impediments to its enactment.

The Committee voted favorable with direction to the Zoning and Legislative Counsel to prepare an amendment which addresses the concern raised by the citizen groups to ensure that the provisions of CB-3-2015 do not restrict access to recreational trails in areas of transmission lines.