

RE: Opposition to the Planning Commission finding that the NextERA Proposal for the Woodside substation was in substantial accord with Frederick County's Comprehensive Plan

October 8, 2025

Dear Frederick County Supervisors,

First I'd like to remind you three of the core values stated in the Frederick County Comprehensive Plan:

- A government concerned with long range planning that protects our rural heritage and directs its future growth through planned infrastructure.
- A government that looks to the future and implements plans to insure that the quality of life for future generations is preserved.
- A government unit based on honesty, trust, integrity, and respect that understands the importance of clear communication and a willingness to listen.

The Planning Commission discussion that I observed last Wednesday October 1st on NextERA's proposal for the Woodside substation and subsequent vote finding it to be in substantial accord with the comprehensive plan did not conform to these core values. While three planning commission members Vaughn Whitacre, Charles DeHaven and Mollie Brannon raised serious concerns and substantive issues with the proposal leading them to vote NO, the discussion from the remaining members lacked any rational thought or substantive insight.

Those members who voted the proposal was in substantial accord focused on

- 1) The application was submitted 9/5 we have 60 days to act and we don't meet again before the deadline (the October 15 planning commission meeting has been cancelled).
- 2) If we approve this meeting is good enough, if we deny we have to provide a supporting rationale.
- 3) A substation is a "by-right" use for a property zoned RA.

It must be noted that the September 17th Planning Commission meeting was canceled and the October 15th, planning commission meeting has also been cancelled. The only opportunity for the public to be heard was at the October 1 planning commission meeting. That was also the only PUBLIC discussion on NextERA's proposal. This begs the question as to what closed door meetings were held as the majority of the planning commission members had clearly already made up their minds.

The Woodside substation is not in substantial accord with Frederick County's Comprehensive Plan for the following reasons:

1. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is : “guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and **harmonious development of the territory** which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, **best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.**”

NextERA's proposal for a 500kV transmission substation 40 feet from existing homes does not meet this criteria. In fact such a substation degrades the health and safety of the residential community and degrades the general welfare and prosperity.

The property is comprised of 72 acres a portion of which is a Rural Preservation Tract adjacent to the residential homes on Jolene Lane. Rolling fields, mature trees and fresh air and quiet. The Clear Brook area has been zoned agricultural and residential for generations. There is no "existing industrial landscape" this is an empty field - the proposed structures are 40 - 50 feet taller than the existing lines most of which are hidden behind mature trees!

A substation such as this will be an eyesore and blight on the community, the lights and noise and EMFs radiating from this site will be a clear detriment to the health and welfare of the residents. It will destroy the equity the adjacent home owners have in their properties - which is clearly a detriment to their welfare and individual prosperity as well.

NextERA's statement that there "are no anticipated impacts on environmental features, cultural resources, air quality, or water quality as a result of this project" is a gross understatement of reality of an industrial build out of this scale. The nearest 500kV substation is the Doubs substation in Frederick County, Maryland - I would suggest a drive by.

Further, this is a transmission substation not a distribution substation. There is no electric generation facility here and Frederick County is not a load delivery point for any of the lines that will connect to it. As a point of fact, there are no connections to any load in Frederick County along those existing HVAC lines! Frederick County is a pass through to Loudoun County's Data Center Alley.

This proposal would degrade the health, safety, prosperity and general welfare of Frederick County residents to the benefit of Loudoun County's data center build out.



2. There is no mitigation for current residential properties.

Just because in 2023 an area was shaded "blue" for future light industrial use in 2035 does not mean a 30 acre substation is in accord with that plan 2 years later! This will gut the home equity of every property in that neighborhood now! This is not a gradual transmission to industrial use. There are protections for the homeowners that would enable equal use and enjoyment of their properties. This severely degrades the quality of life for these residents. The original intent of the existing Rural Preservation Tract for the Ridgeway Estates Subdivision (Jolene Lane) for its original intent which was for agricultural purposes or to preserve natural and

environmental features residents and homeowners in this area enjoy. This is the wrong location for a 30 acre substation.

3. NextERA's proposal is an industrial use but it is not a light industrial business.

The focus for the future is office and industrial business development opportunities to ensure employment opportunities. A key goal is to promote desirable businesses and industrial uses the targeted industries are

- Light Industrial
- Pharmaceutical & Medicine Manufacturing, Scientific Research & Development, and Lab Services
- Business Services
- Retail
- Federal & State Facilities
- Healthcare & Health Services

Additionally, the Clear Brook area is one of the county's key locals for prime agricultural soils, making it a significant draw for future agro-tourism businesses.

This substation will take up 70 acres but does not produce jobs. **It is an industrial use but it is not a light industrial business and it certainly cannot be described as a light industrial use either!** Offices, contractors, garages, are suitable a 500kV transmission substation is not! This proposal would remove valuable real-estate envisioned for businesses that create jobs from ever serving that purpose. Once this property becomes a 500kV transmission substation it will never be reclaimed and will likely be expanded to the entirety of the 72 acres over time.

There is no 500kV HVAC Transmission Substation in the Frederick County plan - it is not a "feature shown", it does not serve the public in Frederick County, it removes valuable real-estate envisioned for businesses that create jobs from ever serving that purpose, it is not fitting for the character of its surroundings - which is residential and does not mitigate the effects on those properties. NextERA's proposal is not in substantial accord with Frederick County's Comprehensive Plan.

The application for substantial accord review was submitted September 5 according to the planning commission action must be taken prior to November 5th, or it is deemed approved.

I urge the board of supervisors to :

- Take a vote, vote NO this proposal is not in accord with the comprehensive plan override the planning commission's recommendation that the Woodside substation is in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Direct the Frederick County Attorney to prepare the case for denial of substantial accord with the comprehensive plan.
- Alternatively, extend the review period for 60 days for a thorough review by the county attorney to substantiate a denial and to receive input from the community through public hearings.

Sincerely,

Theresa Ghiorzi