

Nimby Nonsense

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The May 8th demonstrations in Myersville were simply more nonsense from the Frederick County anti-growth movement. They were protesting an application by a gas pipeline firm to install a pumping station near Myersville. It's all part of a pattern of opposition to any infrastructure development that might promote growth in Frederick County.

Natural gas pipelines crisscross the nation and will become more numerous as new gas finds are exploited for commercial development. One problem with any fluid flowing in a pipe is friction, which causes pressure drop along the line. To combat this, pumping stations are installed at strategic locations along the line. The pumping stations boost the pressure in the line and restore the fluid's original flow rate. Without them, flow in the pipe would eventually choke and come to a halt.

The pumping engines burn natural gas obtained from the pipeline and emit no atmospheric pollutants. They make very little, if any, external noise and would have no impact on the surrounding community. One such pumping station is located off Gaithersburg Pike in Rockville. It has been operating for decades and most of its neighbors are probably unaware of its presence.

Not all of the pumping stations are always needed. Some, of course, run continuously. Others are only needed during periods of peak gas usage, such as at night during the winter. Otherwise, they sit idle most of the time and might only be needed when another station is down for maintenance or repairs.

This is another example of willful ignorance on the part of the anti-development crowd. They don't understand these things and don't want to understand them. They have become married to the "Smart Growth" idea being pushed for Maryland.

The State's idea of Smart Growth is to cram people into little city centers where they could live without having to travel far for work or shopping. Access to public transportation would be provided should someone need to travel farther afield. Otherwise, in principle, residents would have about all they need to live in a limited space. The State of Maryland is so enamored of the idea that they have an agency promoting the concept.

A major problem for Smart Growth advocates is that for decades people have been voting with their feet against city life. All across Northeast Maryland and Southeast Pennsylvania, commuter communities have sprung up where people have gone to escape city noise and crowding. One aim of Smart Growth is to restrict the development of infrastructure – roads in particular – serving these little communities and thereby retard their growth. This, of course, would provide a side benefit for the

politicians who have diverted Highway Trust fund money to other projects: less trust fund money would be needed for new projects.

Also standing in opposition to this exurban growth are the conservationists who want to preserve Maryland's rural character. Their concern is for the impact of the human presence on the Chesapeake Bay. The problem they haven't solved is farm runoff. Runoff water from cities and towns can be treated before release back into rivers and streams. Farm runoff cannot. Farmers spray their fields with an array of herbicides, fertilizers, and other chemicals that inevitably find their way into the ground water and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay. *This* is what's killing the Bay, along with over-fishing and over-use.

The Myersville demonstrations reveal just a touch of xenophobia. Apparently it's alright to build, say, a strip mall on the proposed pumping station site where locals could open stores or restaurants. It's something else for outsiders – furriners – to build an odd-looking industrial building inside an ugly chain-link fence hidden by shrubbery.

The reality is that the outsiders are coming. The population is growing and our children – and their children – need places to live. Eventually, they will want their own homes, preferably with a yard for their children to play in. Housing developments are inevitable. So are new shopping malls.

Every time the congress writes a new law it creates a new government agency. New government agencies attract more people to the D.C. area who also will want their own homes. The D.C. megalopolis is coming. Montgomery County is almost completely urbanized. It is only a matter of time before the District and Baltimore are joined together by one big urban expanse.

Urbanization creates a demand for more infrastructure like gas pipelines and power transmission lines with pumping stations and transformer farms on the ground. Without them people in Baltimore or even Frederick County will begin to experience service brownouts in the winter or the heat of the summer. This is our problem as much as theirs and turning a blind eye to other people's problems is undemocratic.

Frederick County is not the Hamptons or Cape Cod where rich residents can look out over rolling farmland or lovely open vistas. Frederick County is Maryland where life is more practical and prosaic. Wealthy landowners may not like it but Frederick County is populated with commoners like everywhere else.