

Enbridge forum on June 24

By Lydia Statz, Union staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, June 17, 2014 10:04 am

JEFFERSON — Jefferson County officials and Enbridge Energy representatives will team up to host a public forum next week for area residents to learn more about the company's local operations.

“Coffee and Conversation with Enbridge,” slated for Tuesday, June 24, from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Puerner Room at the Fort Community Credit Union in Jefferson, will provide an opportunity to ask questions of the company and the local administration.

An Enbridge Energies oil pipeline, Line 61, currently runs through Wisconsin from Superior to Illinois, crossing into Jefferson County near Waterloo. It runs through the southwestern corner of the county, crossing beneath the Rock River south of Fort Atkinson and just north of Lake Koshkonong.

It was constructed in 2007 and currently carries approximately 400,000 barrels of tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, per day. The company plans to increase the pipeline's capacity up to 1.2 million barrels per day by 2015 through construction of several additional pumping stations along the line, including a new one outside of Waterloo in Dane County.

A resolution passed May 13 by the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors opposed a state Department of Natural Resources permit for a separate portion of the project located in Superior, as a way to register the county's voice during the public comment portion of the procedure.

County Supervisor Walt Christiansen, who brought forth the proposal, urged the DNR to reject the company's permit, undertake a full environmental assessment of the pipeline and conduct a public hearing or public information session in Jefferson County before authorizing Enbridge to increase the fluid pressure flowing through the pipeline.

Many members of the public spoke before the county board, saying that they feared the increased pressure and the possibility of a spill or leak affecting nearby property owners and waterways. Since then, questions, concerns and inquiries have flowed in to county board supervisors and officials at a steady rate.

Although the DNR approved the company's permit last week and the expansion already is moving forward, Enbridge officials said the information session will allow them a chance to meet with community members.

“It's just an opportunity for folks to come out and we'll have representatives from Enbridge there,” said Becky Haase, a stakeholder relations specialist for the company.

“We just want to answer questions and chat with people about our system and the upcoming Line 61 upgrade project.”

Haase said this type of event is “not unusual” for the company, and that the number of questions coming from Jefferson County residents prompted Enbridge to set up the meeting.

“We have been in conversation with the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, and they were feeling that they

were getting a lot of questions from their community members, and wanting to get more information,” Haase said. “So that’s why we’re doing it.”

County Board Chairman Jim Schroeder said he has been in talks with the company since just hours after news of the county’s resolution reached Enbridge officials.

“We talked about how we could better communicate. I suggested that they have some sort of public forum, so we’re very happy that they’re planning to do that,” Schroeder said.

“That’s why we do these things, to get people’s attention, and it worked.”

Questions about the event may be addressed to the Jefferson County Administration Department at (920) 674-7101.