

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
Timothy W. Drew, Administrator
Public Information and Permitting Unit
29 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03302

Dear Mr. Drew,

As owners of the Darius Frink Farm in Newington Village, we are strongly opposed to the proposed route for Eversource's Seacoast Reliability Project, which would install a 115 kV transmission line through our farmland. Crossing the farm with an electric transmission line would violate this historic landmark by introducing an incompatible visual element into the viewscape. Furthermore, installation of either an additional overhead or an underground transmission line would violate the terms of a permanent agricultural conservation easement on this property. We presented these facts to Eversource at Public Information Sessions in Newington, where we heard them justify their "selected" route as being the least expensive.

Purchased in 1816, the farm has been continuously owned and operated by the Frink family. In recognition of its integrity and historic significance, the Frink Farm was listed within the Newington Center Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. Bordered by two major roads through the village the farm provides an unspoiled reminder of Newington's rural past.

In 2005 the Frink family placed the farmland under a permanent agricultural conservation easement (Rockingham County Registry of Deeds BK 4517 PG 2431). That deed declares the purpose of the easement to be "the conservation of the 37.9 acres of productive prime, statewide and local important and unique soils, farm and forest land . . . and of the wildlife habitat on the property and the scenic enjoyment of the general public." Purchase of the easement was financed by the Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (now the Agricultural Land Easement Program), the Town of Newington, and by a significant charitable contribution from the Frink family. The Rockingham County Conservation District holds the agricultural easement, with backup enforcement authority vested in the Natural Resource Conservation Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The easement deed states:

No removal, filling, or other disturbances of soil surface, nor any changes in topography, surface or subsurface water systems, wetlands, or natural habitat shall be allowed unless such activities are necessary in the accomplishment of agricultural practices . . .

In 1952 Public Service of New Hampshire purchased the existing utility right-of-way when a distribution line was relocated due to the construction of Pease Air Force Base. Construction of an overhead or underground transmission line along the right-of-way would disturb soils and wetlands and have a permanent detrimental impact on present and future agricultural activities. The conservation easement deed acknowledges the PSNH right-of-way "for the purposes of quality review checks and maintenance operations." The deed also states: "Any granting of further use restrictions that might diminish or impair the agricultural viability or productivity of the property, or otherwise diminish or impair the conservation values of the property are prohibited." In addition, it is important to note that our protected farm includes 3 acres of wetlands providing undisturbed wildlife habitat. We expect the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau will need to conduct a search here for threatened or endangered species.

When Pease Air Force Base was decommissioned in 1994, a portion of the former utility easement was transferred to the Pease Development Authority. This land is uninhabited and unsuitable for development. The Pease right-of-way, some of which apparently is still owned by Eversource, now contains a gas pipeline, along which Eversource has stated that a parallel transmission line could be constructed. Such a route, thrice proposed by Newington citizens, would avoid the Newington Center Historic District, respect our farm's agricultural easement land, and minimize impact to the residents of Newington. Eversource has made no mention of

such an alternative on their website or during a recent press release, implying that the only viable route is through Newington Village. We urge you to consider which route would best serve the long-term interests of the citizens of New Hampshire.

Please share our concerns with members of the boards, committees and commissions involved in the evaluation process.

Sincerely,

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