

Donna:

Please forward this to the Board of Selectmen.

I have been asked to give an opinion regarding the installation of overhead wiring to service the new pad location at the Rte 9/27 Plaza, for the Board of Selectmen's review of a Grant of Location for overhead wiring.

The Town requires that all new electric service installations be placed underground. In this particular case, the location, current traffic volumes and proposed roadway/bridge reconstruction in this area are all reasons to consider allowing the electric service to remain overhead over the roadway. The Engineering Division offers the following construction issues for the Selectmen's consideration.

Underground electrical service in roadways are required to be encased in conduit (pipes) and the conduits are then encased in concrete. The resultant encased duct banks conflict with existing utilities (gas mains, underground communications cables, water and drainage most often) and are impediments to maintenance, repair or relocation of each of these utilities. Multiple underground crossings across the entire width of a right of way are also problematic to future water main replacements, roadway reconstruction or relocation and drainage improvements.

Underground electric conduits require less maintenance and are more resilient to inclement weather, but are much more difficult and much more expensive to repair when a problem does occur. The conductor drop, on an existing pole, is a vulnerable point and is subject to damage due to vehicular pole hits. The distribution companies prefer to locate pole drops in more protected, less traveled locations, such as is the case in this installation.

Anticipated heavy construction on the roadway at and around the proposed bridge reconstruction in this particular location presents a potential risk to the service during construction. Having the utility visible makes it easier to identify and avoid.

The Engineering Division supports the Selectmen's position to require underground electric installations and acknowledges that grants of location are not our purview. For the reasons noted above, our preference would be to require overhead services to private properties that are located on the opposite side of the street from the transmission wires. Overhead service would extend to a pole on the served private property and then drop to an underground conduit, similar to the existing installation at the 9/27 Plaza.
