

Selectmen vote to ask CL&P to cancel plans for power line

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WINSTED — Selectmen voted unanimously Monday night to ask that the Connecticut Light & Power Co. cancel its plans to run a 27,600-volt power line about a mile through a residential area of town.

The board's decision came after residents of the Walnut Street area presented a petition opposing the line and said they were concerned about possible health hazards posed by the line's magnetic field.

They also said the line would ruin the aesthetics of Walnut Street and that new, heavier utility poles could endanger traffic on narrow parts of the street.

Selectmen agreed to ask CL&P to halt work on the line and seek an alternate route or put the line underground. Mayor William H. McCabe said a letter would be sent to the company today.

"I would not want to live in a neighborhood that had a 27,600-volt line," said Selectman John F. Gauger Jr.

Selectman Walter D. Miller said: "Aesthetically, it doesn't make sense to go down that beautiful street. This is going to look like hell, and you can't tell me any different."

Robert C. Dobson, the power company's general manager for the Torrington district, indicated the company would halt work on the power line at the request of selectmen, but said installation of the heavier utility poles will continue where existing poles need replacing.

"Legally, you can't stop me," Dob-

son told selectmen.

He said the power company will need permission from the state to cancel its plan. The project is designed to improve service in the area by installing the line between the substation on Case Avenue in Winsted to the Riverston Substation on Route 20, a distance of about two miles.

Charlene LaVole, the town's community lawyer, led an effort last week to tell residents in the Walnut Street area about the power company's plans. She told selectmen CL&P officials told her they would consider an alternate route or possible cancellation of the project.

Copies of a news story about the planned power line route were hand-delivered to residents Thursday by students and by Jamie Scrimgeour, an associate with the community lawyer's office.

Although residents said they wanted more information about the possible health affects, Scrimgeour told selectmen there are definite conclusions in the controversy over possible health hazards from electromagnetic fields generated by power lines.

Dobson said the line would be designed in such a way that "this particular installation is not a health hazard."

He said it would be less expensive to have the line go along Route 8 and north to Route 20, but the power company wanted a "totally independent system" from the 27,600-volt line that exists on Route 8.