



**County of Spotsylvania**  
**Department of Planning**  
**Staff Report**

Special Use Permit # SUP18-0006  
(Chancellor Voting District)

**Board of Supervisors**  
**September 11, 2018**

Planning Commission  
Recommendation: Approval of the Special Use Permit with conditions

Staff Recommendation: Approval of the Special Use Permit with conditions

Project: SUP18-0006 Columbia Gas – Western PIG Insertion Facility

Owner/Applicant: Shirley P. Joseph /Columbia Gas of Virginia, Inc.

Request: Special use permit approval to allow a public utility, light, on Rural (RU) zoned property

Tax Map Parcel: 4-10-6 (portion)

Location: The property is located at 15213 Spotswood Furnace Road, which is located on the west side of Spotswood Furnace Road (Route 620) approximately .85 miles north of the Spotswood Furnace Road (Route 620) and Elys Ford Road (Route 610) intersection.

Zoning Overlay: Reservoir Protection Overlay District  
River Protection Overlay District

Future Land Use  
Designation: Rural Residential

Historic Resources: None known

Date Application Deemed  
Complete: 4/23/2018

Community Meeting: 10/12/2017



## I. Analysis

The applicant, Columbia Gas of Virginia, Inc., is requesting special use permit approval for a Public Utility, Light, in order to install a Pipeline Inspection Gauge (PIG) Insertion Facility on a residential lot located at 15213 Spotswood Furnace Road. A PIG Insertion Facility, also known as a “PIG Launcher,” is essentially an empty aboveground pipeline access port. A Pipeline Inspection Gauge (PIG) is inserted into the pipeline port and travels through the gas mains in order to clean, inspect, maintain and provide data for maintenance purposes to Columbia Gas. Once operational, the described PIG operations are performed once a year and the facility will be inspected once every two (2) months; therefore the traffic impact is minimal. The total lot area is 5.16 acres with an exclusive easement on a portion of the property, totaling .32 acres, in order to accommodate the proposed use. The subject property is an ideal location for Columbia Gas as it is currently vacant and located immediately adjacent to the existing gas line main. The property is surrounded on all three sides by existing residential properties all approximately 5 acres in size with the closest residence approximately 435’ away. Primary access to the PIG site will be a VDOT approved paved entrance from Spotswood Furnace Road with a 10’ gravel access road along the gas easement to the facility. The facility will be setback from the right of way approximately 625’ and be completely secured with a 6’ chain link fence which is screened with forest green slats on all sides of the fenced area. The access gate will include a security locking system to be accessed by Columbia Gas employees only. The fenced area is approximately 7,500 square feet of gravel with the piping and access ports being approximately 4 feet aboveground. The aboveground pipes will be completely screened by the proposed fencing, see piping example in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: PIG Launcher Site aboveground piping – Please note, proposed fencing will include forest green slats to complete screen the facility.**





Approval of the special use for the PIG site will not prohibit the subject property from developing as a residential lot. The property contains sufficient area to accommodate a dwelling, well and septic system.

The applicant conducted a community meeting on October 12, 2017; however no one from the community attended. Staff's initial concern related to the proposal was primarily related to the visual impact the site would have from adjacent residential properties and Spotswood Furnace Road. The applicant accommodated staff by staking out the dimensions of the proposed facility prior to staff's site visit. Please see photographs below with staff's observations.

**Figure 4: View East – Facing Spotswood Furnace Road**



*This photo is taken from the edge of the proposed facility facing east towards Spotswood Furnace Road along the existing gas easement. The proposed facility is setback 625' from Spotswood Furnace Road. Given significant setback and dense vegetation, the visual impact of the proposed facility will be almost non-existent.*

**Figure 5: View West – Facing the PIG site**



*This photo is taken from the edge of the gas easement adjacent to the residential lot to the north. The approximate location of the facility is identified with the yellow dot. From this location the facility is approximately 350' away. With the existing dense vegetation, the visual impact from the residence is non-existent. Standing at this location is approximately 100' from the residence and from this perspective one could see the slatted fence in the distance.*

The Design Standards Manual requires a transitional screen to be installed along the property boundaries to buffer the more intense use from the existing and future adjacent residential uses. Given the amount of existing dense vegetation, staff is recommending a modified transitional screen which provides for the installation of a continuous evergreen screen around the fenced facility. This will include a minimum of 20 Holly trees, 6' in height at the time of planting. With the existing dense vegetation, the green slatted fencing and the proposed landscaping, the visual impact of the proposed facility will be minimized. The plantings adjacent to the facility will be more impactful than planting at the property line or elsewhere on the site.

## II. Standards of Review for Special Use Approval

The Planning Commission shall not recommend, nor shall the Board of Supervisors approve, the proposed special use unless it satisfies the following standards:

STANDARDS OF REVIEW FOR SPECIAL USE APPROVAL	
STANDARD	STAFF COMMENT
1. Proposed use is in accord with the comprehensive plan and other official plans adopted by the county.	The proposal is located outside of the Primary Development Boundary in an area designated as Rural Residential land use. Development within the Rural Residential land use area is typically large lot residential, cluster developments, farms and forestland. Utility installations such as proposed are generally appropriate across all land use designations as critical pieces of infrastructure serving populations throughout the utility service network. Please see Appendix A for complete Comprehensive Plan Analysis.
2. Proposed use or development of the land will be in harmony with the scale, bulk, coverage, density, and character of the area.	The applicant has designed the site in order to limit the visual impact on from Spotswood Furnace Road as well as the adjacent properties. The facility will include security fencing with green slats to blend with the existing vegetation. While a certain amount of clearing will be required to accommodate the facility, the remaining vegetation along with the proposed landscaping surrounding the facility will significantly limit the visual impact from the right of way and neighbors.
3. Proposed use will not hinder or discourage the appropriate development and use of adjacent land and buildings or impair the value thereof.	Approval of the special use for the PIG site will not prohibit the subject property from developing as a residential lot. The property contains sufficient area to accommodate a dwelling, well and septic system.
4. Proposed use will not adversely affect the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood.	The facility will be secured and will not generate a significant amount of traffic with only one inspection every two months. The aboveground pipes are empty and only serve to inspect and provide maintenance data. No adverse

	impacts to the health or safety of persons residing in the neighborhood have been identified.
5. Proposed use will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements within the neighborhood.	The facility will be secured and will not generate a significant amount of traffic with only one inspection every two months. The above ground pipes are empty and only serve to inspect and provide maintenance data. The proposed use is not expected to be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements within the neighborhood.
6. Proposed use is appropriately located with respect to transportation facilities, water supply, wastewater treatment, fire and police protection, waste disposal, and similar facilities.	The proposal is located within the service area for Fire Station 5, which is located approximately 5.9 miles from the site. The facility will be accessed from Spotswood Furnace Road which is a publicly maintained road. The site will not generate solid waste or require a water supply.
7. Proposed use will not cause undue traffic congestion or create a traffic hazard.	Once operational, Columbia Gas will inspect the PIG facility once every two (2) months; therefore the traffic impact is minimal.
8. Proposed use will have no unduly adverse impact on environmental or natural resources.	The proposed aboveground pipes are empty, containing no gas, and are used solely for inspections and maintenance to the pipeline. Development of the property must be approved by the County via the site plan process to ensure all stormwater and environmental impacts are addressed. The Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Natural Heritage Resources Predictive Model places possible habitat for the small whorled pogonia in close proximity to this site. However, the applicant conducted a survey of the area for the small whorled pogonia as part of Federal Endangered Species Act compliance and noted no location potentially suitable for the species' habitat.



### **III. Findings**

#### **In Favor:**

- A. The proposal is consistent and compatible with the development district and land use designation as per the Comprehensive Plan.
- B. Visual impacts have been mitigated with the proposed landscaping and screened fencing surrounding the facility.
- C. The proposal provides a necessary piece of public infrastructure which will enhance efficiency and safety to serve the County population.

### **IV. Conclusions & Recommended Conditions**

The proposed use provides a critical piece of infrastructure serving populations throughout the utility service network, and the visual impacts of the facility will be limited given the setback, existing vegetation and proposed landscaping. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the Special Use Permit to allow the public utility, light, on Rural (RU) zoned property:

- 1. The property shall be developed in accordance with the Generalized Development Plan (GDP) titled, “West PIG INSERTION FACILITY SPECIAL USE PERMIT 15213 SPOTSWOOD FURNACE ROAD” dated April 13, 2018 and last revised June 4, 2018.
- 2. The facility shall be completely fenced and all fencing shall be six (6) in height and screened with forest green slats as detailed on the GDP.
- 3. Landscaping shall be provided around the facility, as detailed on the GDP, in order to screen the facility to the extent possible from the public right of way and neighboring properties.
- 4. The facility shall not be lit.

#### *Planning Commission Public Hearing Update:*

*The Planning Commission held a public hearing on August 15, 2018 and no citizens spoke for or against the request. On a motion by Mr. Newhouse, seconded by Mr. Smith, the Planning Commission voted 6-0 to recommend approval with conditions.*



## **SUP18-0006: WESTERN PIG SITE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANALYSIS**

The Spotsylvania County Comprehensive Plan presents a long range land use vision for the County. The Comprehensive Plan sets forth principles, goals, policies, and implementation techniques that will guide the development activity within the County and promote, preserve, and protect the health, safety, and general welfare of its citizens. Specifically, the Plan provides data and analysis on land use, transportation, housing, natural and historic resources, and public facilities and utilities. The purpose of this document is not to regulate, but rather guide land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions. This guidance seeks to ensure continued economic and community vitality while ensuring necessary policies and infrastructure are in place to provide for the continuation of quality services to Spotsylvania's residents and businesses.

The Columbia Gas Western PIG Site proposal is located outside of the Primary Development Boundary in an area designated as Rural Residential land uses as depicted on the Future Land Use Map. Lands outside of the County's designated Primary Development are chiefly intended for rural and agricultural land uses. As per the Future Land Use Element of the November 14, 2013 Comprehensive Plan (last updated May 22, 2018), the Rural Residential category encompasses most of the area outside the Primary Development Boundary. In general, Rural Residential development has a density of one unit per two acres and greater, including large lot residential, cluster development, farms, and forestland. These properties are served by private wells and septic systems. The preservation of land through conservation easements or preservation methods defined by the County Code may also be appropriate within this land use. The land use category also supports neighborhood commercial scale projects as a means to provide convenience and services to rural populations. Utility installations such as proposed are generally appropriate across all land use designations as critical pieces of infrastructure serving populations throughout the utility service network.

Considering the application falls under a special use permit requirement it is good to note that as per County Code Section 23-4.5.1, Special uses are considered generally compatible with other land uses permitted in a zoning district but which, because of their unique characteristics or potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhood and the County as a whole, require individual consideration of their design, configuration, and/or operation at the particular location proposed.

The proposal is consistent and/ or compatible with the development district and land use designation as per the Comprehensive Plan.

An analysis considering the Western PIG Site proposal as it relates to Comprehensive Plan Goals, Policies, and Guiding Principles is below:

### **Introduction and Vision:**

**Guiding Principles and Policies A. Spotsylvania County is a "business friendly" community and local job creation is a priority; A.1, Encourage business investment in the County and promote relocation of federal and state agencies to the County, providing more opportunities for Spotsylvania County residents to work in the County.** Proposal is business friendly resulting in business investment in utility related infrastructure serving the community.

Spotsylvania County Government

# Appendix A

Comprehensive Plan Analysis

## **SUP18-0006: WESTERN PIG SITE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANALYSIS**

**Guiding Principles and Policies B.4. Preserve significant natural, historic, and cultural resources of the County to ensure the continued allure of the County as a tourism destination.** As noted in the GDP and project narrative there are no cultural or historic resource impacts anticipated with this project. Staff queried the Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Cultural Resources Information System and note no known or predictor for significant historic resources onsite or in the immediate area.

The Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Natural Heritage Resources Predictive Model places possible habitat for the small whorled pogonia in close proximity to this site. The applicant conducted a survey of the area for the small whorled pogonia as part of Federal Endangered Species Act compliance and noted no location potentially suitable for the species' habitat.

### **Land Use:**

**Future Land Use Map.** The proposal is consistent and/ or compatible with the development district and land use designation as per the Comprehensive Plan.

**Land Use Policies Applicable to All Land Uses 8. Redevelopment and investment in existing developed areas should be encouraged provided that the development does not adversely impact adjoining properties.** This utility installation site is expected to be low impact. Applicant narrative addresses a number of site safety related questions that were raised throughout the review process. In addition to safety related mitigations, the proposal is not expected to impact the surroundings with night operations, lighting, noise spillage once operational.

### **Transportation:**

**Transportation Policy 1. Maintain acceptable Levels of Service on public roads; Policy 2. Ensure that new development does not degrade Levels of Service and mitigates its impact on the transportation network.** The proposal is not expected to adversely impact the nearby road network with additional traffic generation.

### **Historic Resources:**

**Historic Resources Policies and Strategies 2. The County should support projects that consider and mitigate the impact of development projects on historic and cultural resources during the rezoning, special use, and capital project planning process. Policies and Strategies 2.1. Development applications and staff reports should identify historic and cultural resources in proximity to proposed rezoning, special use, or capital project, and evaluate the impacts of the project on the resource in question.** As noted in the GDP and project narrative there are no cultural or historic resource impacts anticipated with this project. Staff queried the Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Cultural Resources Information System and note no known or predictor for significant historic resources onsite or in the immediate area.

## **SUP18-0006: WESTERN PIG SITE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANALYSIS**

### **Natural Resources:**

**Natural Resources Policy #1. Balance the protection of environmental resources and natural wildlife habitats with development. Policy #1.1. The County should support the mitigation of impacts upon unique and/or endangered resources including rare species and their habitats as part of the development review process.** The Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Natural Heritage Resources Predictive Model places possible habitat for the small whorled pogonia in close proximity to this site. The applicant conducted a survey of the area for the small whorled pogonia as part of Federal Endangered Species Act compliance and noted no location potentially suitable for the species' habitat.