Rehoboth Reporter letter -

Concerning the gas Compressor Station in Rehoboth

Dear Mr. Cavanagh ,

Let’s set aside the well-documented and lengthy history of Spectra Energy’s (Spectra is the Texas- based private corporation behind the current Access Northeast pipeline proposal in our state) safety infractions, negligence, pipeline and compressor station accidents. Let’s also table for now our EPA’s failure to enforce adequate safety and health protections to the communities they are supposed to protect and serve. Let’s look instead at the supposed economic advantages of this pipeline expansion as your May 10, 2016 letter to the Reporter suggests, and why Spectra’s “Access Northeast” is a bad deal for our citizens.

First, let’s address your premise that we in “New England are starved for gas”. Did you know that we are already 64% reliant on “natural gas” for electric generation in our state? Did you know that Massachusetts already hosts 3 natural gas import terminals that are more than adequate to meet our needs and that their use is currently down 33% since 2010? Did you know that in 2014 gas imports supplied only 6.7% of Massachusetts’ demand for natural gas? Were you aware that our Attorney General drafted a comprehensive report (11/2015) that clearly demonstrated the lack of any need for additional gas reserves to satisfy our electricity needs now and into foreseeable future?

So, what is going on? Well, what has happened is this: The source of our electric energy has been shifted from primarily *imported* gas to *domestic* gas, and our delivery system has been the aged Algonquin pipeline. The existing Algonquin pipeline (also owned by Spectra) runs through NY and CT into RI and MA and transports roughly 20billlion cubic tons (bcm) of natural gas per annum. The Algonquin has been the primary source of natural gas for electric generation for our state. Historically that gas has been sourced primarily from the Gulf of Mexico and from our LNG import terminals in MA.

So let’s look at our high electric rates. You are entirely right- the ratepayers in New England are paying a very high price for their electricity. Given our 64% reliance on a relatively cheap (and domestically abundant) fuel, one might wonder why we haven’t seen our electricity rates drop. I’ll tell you why: The Algonquin pipeline itself has played a very significant role in our higher electric rates. The Algonquin has deteriorated and is leaking gas and are we paying for it. Were you aware that we are sitting on some of the oldest pipeline infrastructures in the US- with MA itself having 20,000 documented pipeline leaks? In 2013 the Senator Markey report revealed MA ratepayers paid between $640 million- $1.5 billion for this lost and unaccounted for gas from 2001-2011.That is 99 billion cubic feet worth of lost gas that we paid for in our electric bills. That’s right; **we have been paying for the lost** **gas from our leaking pipelines not the utility companies!** And to bring this closer to home, although there is no available information on the condition of Rehoboth pipelines, there are presently 36 leaks identified in Seekonk and 99 leaks in Attleboro. And who is responsible for fixing these leaks and replacing these pipes? Our utility companies! And since we, the ratepayers, are paying for the lost and unaccounted for gas, where is their incentive to make the necessary repairs?

But wait… it gets even better! Now Spectra has teamed up with these very utility companies (National Grid and Eversource Energy, with 20% and 40% share respectively) to push the Access Northeast pipeline proposal which is slated to deliver 35% more gas and this time from the fracking fields of PA. This will mean adding Compressor Stations, Metering Stations and new high pressure pipelines linking to the existing decrepit Algonquin pipeline.

The proposed Rehoboth Compressor is central to this massive pipeline project and would be needed to push these higher volumes of natural gas to the northwest of us through Boston and ultimately through Maine into Canada and also to our southeast, to a new LNG (liquefied natural gas) plant consisting of, in part, two huge LNG storage tanks in Acushnet, MA. Each tank would be 18 ½ stories high and each the size of a football field. Also, it is worth noting that to our west, there are plans in the works to expand the compressor station in Burrillville RI, and another LNG facility is being proposed at Fields Point in Providence. The Rehoboth Compressor station is presently sited on a parcel of land in a residential neighborhood (whose exact size is yet to be determined) in North Rehoboth. Compressor station accidents are *real* and with our station sited to be linked into the compromised pipeline infrastructures in our area that threat would be an amplified. Potentially catastrophic explosions will be just one of the many shadows this station will cast on our community. Rather than footing the bill for a private corporation’s unnecessary and expensive pipeline project we should insist that the leaking Algonquin pipeline gets fixed. The Algonquin leaks waste natural gas reserves we could be benefiting from, harm our environment, our health, and our pockets. We not need or want a compressor station in our town (or in any town) and Spectra Energy’s pipeline is bad for our state and it is bad for Rehoboth.

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Rehoboth, MA

Citizens Against the Rehoboth Compressor

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