

Dear Ms. Hatfield,

I enjoyed meeting you at the hearing held at Nashua Community College and wanted to thank you for hosting the public comment hearings and for your work on NH's Energy Strategy.

I've spent a lot of time pouring over regional energy policy, in an effort to learn both NH's decision-making context and the historical rationale for current policy positions. I am a Hollis resident, so the natural gas expansion that is rapidly overtaking the region has come into stark focus in the past 6 months for my neighbors and me. But beyond my interest as a resident in an affected community, I am an advocate for defining both a strategy and a goal - that helps us improve our state and region, over time.

The energy landscape in New England has shifted recently to incorporate a strong, new gas industry narrative that has us lining up for 'more', 'clean', 'cheap', 'natural' gas. This carefully crafted narrative works to convince policymakers and citizens alike, that increasing our region's dependence on this particular fossil fuel will be of some immediate benefit for peak energy demand and price volatility; but even the industry, does not claim that fossil fuel is sustainable - and yet, the plan is to accept a superficial premise and increase regional dependence - discouraging investment in other, cleaner technologies, by this choice.

The region seems to have evolved from considering NG as a bridging strategy, to betting the region's energy future on an elaborate NG infrastructure. So as disappointed as I am to see this petroleum industry narrative take root - my greater concern is that we are ignoring a far more compelling narrative, that of the International Panel on Climate Change 2014 Report.

The NH Energy Strategy Report pulls policy away from prior recommendations (Independent Study of Energy Policy Issues 9/30/2011) that praised our ability to keep natural gas dependence low. The currently proposed series of natural gas expansion projects seek a significant increase in the adoption of natural gas, creating a ubiquitous dependence that will help the petroleum industry in their quest to keep harvesting and burning fossil fuels 'for a long time to come'. So does NH acknowledge climate science and its impact on our environment beyond simply adding renewable sources to our portfolio?

The Energy Strategy Report clears the way for significant expansion of natural gas for everything from the conversion of residential homes and transportation sector vehicles to powering the electric grid. And yet, the only justification I can find is that gas is cheap and we may want to have more of it available, to address peak demand (again, to address cost). The 'cleaner fuel source' is also used in the reasoning, but this red herring only takes into account the cleaner burning properties and not the entire harvesting process - where the net climate effect may prove even dirtier than the fuels we seek to replace.

Algonquin Power & Utilities Company (parent to Liberty Utilities in Southern NH) states that their growth model is acquisitions, (Granite State Electric Company and EnergyNorth Natural Gas) expansion, (Kinder Morgan & Spectra Energy pipes) and price increases. We are marching to their drumbeat and undermining NH's long term sustainable energy goals - by limiting our citizens' fuel choices and expecting this unregulated industry to remain cheap and stable.

Natural gas is only outpacing energy sector competitors today, because it is externalizing its true costs as an unregulated energy source. Industry regulation stabilizes consumer pricing - and the oil and gas industries are currently operating outside Clean Air and Clean Water standards and without the impending add-on of a carbon tax. These costs, along with elaborate

infrastructure spending, make natural gas a huge investment for the region, that will inflate consumer prices. So while we move to accommodate Kinder Morgan and Spectra Energy and Liberty Utilities in the near term, they are working on a plan to expand an infrastructure that will ensure their ability to reap higher prices, long after regulation catches up to the dirty practices of their fuel source.

Once the true environmental cost of natural gas extraction is levied, we will be longing for the days when Yankee helped power our electrical grid, with zero CO2 emissions. Letting this plant close, because it cannot compete against a subsidized gas boom, should be reconsidered as part of any strategic regional plan. There is no silver bullet in energy, unless it is our ability to continue to maintain a diverse portfolio - without significant reliance on any one source - especially if that source is fossil-fuel based.

The Vermont Yankee plant just had its license renewed by the NRC for 20 years. Yet, the benefits it brings to our economy, including over 600 excellent jobs and over 600 MWe of steady, reliable, clean power for our grid, is insufficient to invest in keeping it running? We do not even acknowledge Yankee's reliable service, and clean contribution to our energy portfolio or the fact that it provides capacity lacking in other clean energy sources. But the loss of Yankee is a big part of the reason we now see an opening for natural gas expansion. This loss of a clean power source is a critical omission in our sustainable landscape conversation and demands another look from our leadership.

Nuclear is expensive expressly because it is highly regulated and we are not giving it the attention it deserves. We are not pushing true innovation by demanding our government speed up red tape in getting new-nuclear online, with newer, safer designs (which exist). As long as we allow existing nuclear plants to languish in use and public opinion, our best chance at reducing impending climate impacts, will recede from view. (the IPCC report concluded that nuclear must be part of the solution if we are to avoid further climate disruption and yet the messaging we're responding to, parrots the fossil fuel industry and not our scientists).

NH and the region will be judged in the future by the choices we make today. There has got to be a way to clarify that the current plan for NG, will be limited to a bridging strategy. If we must use NG as a bridging strategy, then clearly spell out how that bridge will work, when it will end, and how we will wean off of that dependence. Sponsoring bad corporate behavior (energy pollution, the taking of private and conservation lands, and increased carbon and methane emissions from pipes all over the country), at the expense of New England's natural resources feels like being caught on a runaway train. We only have a certain length of track to avoid disaster and we need for our leaders to take control of the break. Natural gas is not a panacea - it is a fossil fuel and as such, its role needs to be contained if we are truly pursuing a sustainable energy strategy.

Finally, the role nuclear power plays, and will play, in our energy portfolio needs to be defined and not ignored. The lack of any strategy relative to approximately 30% of the region's power points to consultants who were either instructed not to mention nuclear (he who shall not be named!), or a bias toward the wide-scale adoption of natural gas, despite its categorization as a dirty fuel source in our own NH statutes and ordinances. Either of these reasons, is unacceptable - because nuclear has an important role to play in helping us move off of fossil fuels. Perhaps we should begin educating people on its benefits, rather than caving in to those who bear an irrational fear of a clean energy source that has caused less deaths than wind power.

I am hoping that the final review of the draft report will be conducted with a eye toward ensuring that our 'strategy' includes honest discussion of how we intend to limit the role of natural gas and what mix of nuclear power will be invested in - to maintain a sustainable energy mix that supports our climate change imperative. Saying we cannot afford nuclear - while diverting to a new infrastructure plan, is short-sighted and disingenuous. We simply need the right strategy in order to make clean energy sources viable.

When I look at the Hollis landscape caught in the crosshairs of this gas boom, I can hardly believe that NH's leaders would permit private industry to carve up a bucolic community, so carefully designed to maintain NH's historic rural character, for the promise of cheap gas, that will not last. I hope you will consider using the NH Energy Strategy report to truly define a strategic vision that does not cave into the demands of the most powerful industry in history. Its a lot to ask, I know. But NH and New England are known for better-than-average decisions.

I very much appreciate your time, effort and expertise in this matter and wish you much luck on the finalization of the report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Best regards,

Kat McGhee