

Towns of Weymouth



February 13, 2019

His Excellency Charles D. Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth
Room 360, The State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Governor,

Thank you for meeting with Congressman Stephen Lynch and us, the mayors of the Towns of Weymouth, Braintree, and the City of Quincy, last month. We met to discuss your Administration's approval of an air permit for the natural gas compressor station proposed in North Weymouth. We appreciate you listening to us and providing us the opportunity to discuss the risks to public health and safety this natural gas facility would bring to the Fore River basin and our communities.

You encouraged us when we heard you indicated you were holding the natural gas companies to the highest allowable standards. That you agreed to follow through on further scrutiny and the two remaining reviews you promised earlier, involving public safety and climate resiliency studies, and committed to anew at our meeting also heartened us.

We would like, however, the opportunity to continue discussing with you how the existing reviews have been insufficient. For example, the Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility issued last week a nineteen-page report showing the inadequacies of the health impact assessment (HIA). The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Department of Public Health, two agencies under your control, conducted the report. Furthermore, MAPC itself came out in opposition to the proposed compressor station, but not for the reasons in its own HIA, but for other environmental, public health and safety reasons.

We could go on and on with how the existing level of review does not protect the residents of Weymouth, Quincy, and Braintree. But, thank you again for the added reviews you agreed to in our meeting, which were the following:

First, in your letter of July 14, 2017, you directed the Secretary of Public Safety and the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs to create an opportunity for the public to explain their safety concerns. Undersecretary for Homeland Security, Patrick McMurray, and Peter Ostroskey, State Fire Marshal, met with our Local Emergency Planning Committee on October 2, 2018 to hear from our local public safety experts. We believe our Town's public safety experts gave them information of which they were not aware, and we opened their eyes to the concerns we had. Undersecretary McMurray expressed an interest in learning more before he left that position. Thus, we would like you to find who will continue the work of this public safety review.

Second, in your letter you wrote that the Commonwealth's Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) will review the project's safety and reliability. CZM would consider the effects of coastal storm conditions, examining rising sea levels and other concerns we have about the siting of this proposed compressor station. We asked all relevant Federal and state agencies for examples of compressor stations sited with this proximity to a waterfront or within in a hurricane inundation zone. No agency could give us a similar example.

Our research has showed no other compressor stations on the East or West Coast of the United States this close to the coast. The natural gas companies have located some compressor stations in the Gulf of Mexico, however, but those compressor stations are part of the natural gas production system as opposed to the natural gas transmission system proposed here.

When we tried to compare the proven adverse health effects of compressor stations in the natural gas production system, we have been told by the natural gas companies that those compressor stations are totally different. We cannot compare them to the compressor station proposed for Weymouth. In that case, no compressor stations in the United States would be this close to the coast, in filled tidelands, or in hurricane inundations zones near open water.

The only compressor stations identified in our research in hurricane inundation zones are miles inland upstream along major rivers. That is like comparing the potential storm flooding of Haverhill to the flooding adjacent to Boston Harbor. Again, since we received no information from any state or Federal agencies, we conducted our own research that shows siting a compressor station next to Boston Harbor on filled tidelands to which the public has rights would be unprecedented. We would like to know CZM is carefully studying these issues as you required them to do.

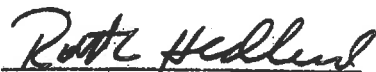
MAPC similarly called for more study of these issues, "public safety, climate resiliency, and climate change, ... extremely important impacts that should be thoroughly studied and taken into account before any approval of this facility." While we vigorously disagree with the conclusions of MAPC's HIA, we wholeheartedly agree with their call for further review before any other approval. We trust further review will show more reasons why this proposed compressor station is the wrong place for a wrong idea.

While we discussed the other review you promised in your July 2017 letter, we would like to see your Administration finish the further review you agreed to also encouraged us. We asked, and you agreed, that you direct DEP to audit the Permanent Solution Statement, submitted by the natural gas company in December 2018, which state regulations allow. We believe the audit findings will reveal that the coal ash, which all parties agree is on the site, does not qualify as "Historic Fill." If historic fill, then the coal ash would require less remediation. If DEP finds the coal ash was not historic fill, then the natural gas company would need to clean up the high levels of arsenic at the site.

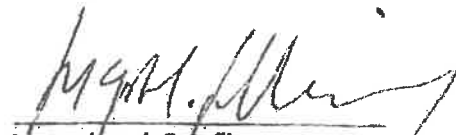
The best evidence that the coal ash is not historic fill is that this area of Boston Harbor was not filled until last century, unlike the filling in other areas of Boston Harbor that occurred in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. In the early 1920s, the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of Boston, later known as Boston Edison, constructed the Edgar Steam Electric Station, which was a coal-fired engineering marvel of its time. An audit is necessary because of the limited review of the natural gas company's sparse conclusion. The company wrote that this site had no history of filling until a huge coal-fired plant opened next door. But, the abundant coal ash on the site was not the result of the new electric plant next door that opened at the same time.

In conclusion, thank you once again for your interest in wanting to hear more from us about this project we worry will threaten the health and safety of the residents, who elected us to represent them. We also appreciate your interest in holding the natural gas company to the highest allowable standard. We hope we can work together to protect our residents.

Sincerely,



Mayor Robert L. Hedlund
Town of Weymouth


Mayor Joseph C. Sullivan
Town of Braintree
Mayor Thomas P. Koch
City of Quincy