THE AMHERST BEE

Economics have changed for pipeline project

National Fuel Corporation is awaiting decisions from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for its proposed Northern Access pipeline.

Although the company is likely confident of federal approval, similar approval by the state is not likely to be rubber stamped in light of recent decisions elsewhere in the state.

The project would build a new pipeline from Pennsylvania hydrofracking fields to connect to existing pipeline in southern Erie County, allowing natural gas to be shipped for export to Canada.

Residents in Pendleton and Wheatfield are up in arms over proposals for construction of compressor and condenser stations in their towns crucial to the operation of the pipeline. These residents will bear the risks and get no benefits from the project.

Studies have shown that these facilities release chemicals such as benzene, a known carcinogen, as part of their operations. These stations bear risk for residents of North Amherst as well, as the release has a fallout range of up to 10 miles.

Since the pipeline was proposed in 2014, the economics of the project have changed dramatically. The spot price for natural gas has plummeted from $6.90 per 1 million British thermal units on Feb 6, 2014, to $1.77 per 1 million British thermal units on May 30 of this year.

The intended target market in Ontario recently passed a Climate Action Plan, which would eliminate the burning of all natural gas and heating oil in buildings by 2050.

In light of NYSDEC's denial of the Constitution pipeline in Eastern New York, National Fuel should follow the lead of TransCanada, which halted plans to extend the Keystone XL pipeline when denied permits by Nebraska's Public Service Commission.

Or, in light of the price drop, listen to your accountants and save your ratepayers money and scrap plans for Northern Access.

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