



**City of Northampton**  
MASSACHUSETTS

***In the City Council, October 4, 2018***

Upon the Recommendation of:      Councilor William H. Dwight  
   Councilor Alisa F. Klein  
   Northampton Sustainability and Energy Commission

**R-18.170**

**A RESOLUTION**

**OPPOSING THE EXPANSION OF GAS INFRASTRUCTURE AND CALLING FOR INCREASED DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RENEWABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY SOURCES**

WHEREAS, we are in a climate emergency, facing rising temperatures, droughts, massive storms, forest fires, and rising seas, in which the extraction, processing, transport, and burning of fossil fuels not only plays an enormous role, but pollutes our air by releasing noxious substances that cause many harmful and life-threatening medical conditions such as asthma, COPD, cardiovascular disease, and poor pregnancy outcomes; and

WHEREAS, in its January 4, 2018 [Resolution in Support of 100% Renewable Energy](#), the Northampton City Council recognized the dangerous outcomes of climate change and called for a “rapid attainment of a goal of 100 percent clean, renewable energy for the State of Massachusetts and the City of Northampton” and in that same resolution pledged to “avoid taking actions that could increase the use of fossil fuels or delay the transition to 100 percent renewable energy;” and

WHEREAS, in its June 4, 2015 [Resolution Calling for Transparency and Public Representation Regarding Natural Gas Infrastructure](#), the Northampton City Council cited data that suggests that repairing existing pipeline will eliminate the need for the installation of any new pipeline infrastructure, and calls on gas companies not to build new pipeline, but rather to “repair the current pipeline infrastructure to eliminate the leakage of natural gas and in so doing reduce the health, safety and environmental dangers associated with gas leaks;” and

WHEREAS, public pressure compelled Columbia Gas to identify and fix large methane leaks in its distribution area, yet the company continues to claim capacity shortage issues in the Northampton Lateral pipeline on peak days thus justifying the launch of what it is calling a “reliability project” – the building, at the cost of \$24

million to Columbia Gas rate-payers<sup>1</sup> -- of a new 6-mile, 12-inch “alternate backfeed” pipeline through the city of West Springfield; and

WHEREAS, the City Council’s June 4, 2015 [Resolution Calling for Transparency and Public Representation Regarding Natural Gas Infrastructure](#) called on Columbia Gas to “embrace complete transparency and make public all engineering and financial information substantiating the claim that the Northampton Lateral is at capacity,” but this information has never been shared with Northampton City officials; and

WHEREAS, in response to Columbia Gas’s longstanding moratorium on new gas service installations, Northampton and surrounding communities have aggressively pursued green energy modalities including energy retro-fits, solar energy generation, air-sourced heat pumps, and methane capture, the use of which has reduced our dependency on natural gas while conforming to the goal of using only 100% renewable alternatives to provide our energy; and

WHEREAS, Northampton and its neighbors are on a successful course of establishing a sustainable energy infrastructure that does not rely on fossil fuels, thus significantly reducing the demand for natural gas and challenging the stated need for expanded gas pipeline infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, increasing natural gas supply to Northampton would slow and possibly have adverse effects on the progress of our communities’ commitments to realizing a 100% renewable energy goal.

WHEREAS, on September 14, 2018 a series of Columbia Gas pipeline explosions throughout the Merrimack Valley cities of Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover, Massachusetts resulted in 70 fires, strong gas odors, the death of an 18-year old man, injury to over 25 people, destruction of over 40 homes, 18,000 homes to be left without power, and mass evacuation of over 8,600 people from their homes; and

WHEREAS, immediately following the pipeline explosions in the Merrimack Valley, U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward J. Markey requested a hearing and investigation to be conducted by the Senate Commerce Committee and asked Columbia Gas to “cooperate fully and transparently with federal investigators<sup>2</sup>,” and

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial: Encouraging that Columbia gas sees end to moratorium. *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, 14 November, 2017. <https://www.gazettenet.com/Editorial-Encouraging-thatColumbia-Gas-of-Massachusetts-sees-end-to-moratorium-in-Northampton-and-Easthampton-13724359>

<sup>2</sup> Markey, Edward J., U.S. Senator, & Warren, Elizabeth, U.S. Senator. Letter to Stephen H. Bryant, President and CC of Columbia Gas of MA and Joseph Hamrock, President and CEO of NiSource. Sent on 17 September, 2018.

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) will be conducting an investigation into the Merrimack Valley explosions and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office is tasked with ensuring that the DPU's investigative process is conducted with transparency<sup>3</sup>.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton opposes the building of additional infrastructure that will expand the capacity of gas delivery to the area under the pretense of filling Northampton's energy needs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council strongly supports Columbia Gas's replacement of old and failing pipes and its continued repair of all existing gas leaks to increase safety, reduce dangerous levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and increase capacity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council strongly encourages Columbus Gas to consider liquified natural gas storage as an alternative to pipeline expansion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council supports the development and use of clean, renewable, non-fossil fuel-based energy sources for municipal buildings, as well as incentives for their use in residential projects throughout the City, and calls on Columbia Gas to vigorously join the City's efforts to increase energy efficiency, conservation, and conversion to efficient and sustainable heating and cooling of all residences and buildings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council repeats its request to Columbia Gas to act with full transparency by sharing any data substantiating its claim that new infrastructure is the only method by which it can fulfill demand, and by providing Northampton with peak demand consumption numbers for the city covering the years of 2012-2017.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council calls on Columbia Gas, as it completes pipeline repair, to consider a selective lifting of the moratorium as necessary for gas needs that cannot, as yet, be safely or adequately met by alternatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council supports U.S. Senators Warren and Markey in their efforts to ensure that the recent Merrimack Valley explosions are fully investigated at the federal level, and that they demand higher standards of safety and transparency by Columbia Gas in all of the regions served by Columbia Gas in Massachusetts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council encourages the DPU and MA Attorney General's office to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation of Columbia Gas's role and

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Retrieved from:

<https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Letter%20to%20NiSource%20and%20Columbia%20Gas.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Hand, Mark (18 September, 2018). Columbia Gas faces demands for accountability after deadly Massachusetts explosions. <https://thinkprogress.org/lawmakers-apply-pressure-to-assist-recovery-for-victims-of-massachusetts-gas-explosions-702d03a1521d/>

responsibilities in the Merrimack Valley disaster and take subsequent steps to ensure that such a pipeline disaster never occurs again.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to Columbia Gas President and Chief Operating Officer, Stephen Bryant; U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward J. Markey; U.S. Representative James McGovern; Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker; Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy; Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities' Chair Angela M. O'Connor; Northampton's legislative representatives at the State level; and Northampton, Massachusetts Mayor, David J. Narkewicz.

~~~~ This resolution was developed through the initiative of, and with great assistance from, Northampton activists from Staying Warm Without Additional Pipelines (SWAP).