Legislation Details (With Text)

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Sponsors:	Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams				
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Attachments:	1. Res. No. 1562, 2. March 18, 2021 - Stated Meeting Agenda with Links to Files, 3. Hearing Transcript - Stated Meeting 3-18-21, 4. Minutes of the Stated Meeting - March 18, 2021				

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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12/31/2021	*	City Council	Filed (End of Session)	

Res. No. 1562

Resolution calling upon the New York State Public Service Commission to deny a rate hike and all fossil fuel infrastructure development for the Metropolitan Reliability Infrastructure project.

By Council Member Ampry-Samuel and the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams)

Whereas, In January 2021, NASA reported that 2020 tied with 2016 as the hottest years on record; and

Whereas, The threat of climate change requires all levels of government to take aggressive measures to immediately reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or suffer long-standing and irreversible effects; and

Whereas, In order to reduce GHG emissions, both New York City (City) and New York State (State) have passed laws to significantly reduce these emissions with timebound targets, with New York City committing to reduce its GHG emissions by 80 percent of its 2005 levels by 2050, and the State of New York committing to limit statewide GHG emissions to 40 percent of its 1990 levels by 2030 and 85 percent by 2050; and

Whereas, However, the City's and State's emissions reduction goals cannot be reached without a shift

away from fossil fuels like natural gas and oil, and without creating an increased reliance on clean energy generation such as solar, wind and hydropower; and

Whereas, National Grid is currently seeking to expand a fracked natural gas pipeline being built in New York City by connecting it to an existing pipeline in Brooklyn via a proposal called the Metropolitan Reliability Infrastructure (MRI) project, also known as the North Brooklyn Pipeline project, which would run underneath the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Brownsville, Bedford Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, Bushwick, Williamsburg, and Greenpoint; and

Whereas, The Brooklyn Union Gas Company, doing business as (d/b/a), National Grid NY, (formerly d/b/a KeySpan Energy Delivery New York , ("KEDNY"), and KeySpan Gas East Corporation, d/b/a National Grid, (formerly d/b/a/ KeySpan Energy Delivery Long Island, ("KEDLI"), are two National Grid utilities that have filed Case no. 19-G-0309 and Case no. 19-G-0310, respectively, before the New York State Public Service Commission, seeking a major rate increase that would pay for the final phases of the MRI; and

Whereas, According to the Sane Energy Project, the first three phases of the MRI were presumably paid for by previous ratepayer funds, but the National Grid utilities are seeking a rate increase of $185 million to pay for the final two phases of the pipeline project; and

Whereas, The pipeline is intended to move gas to a National Grid Depot on Newtown Creek, where the utility company plans to expand liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage and vaporizer operations; and

Whereas, The seven-mile long pipeline will trench through several low-income neighborhoods where the majority of the population are people of color, and these same communities are considered 'environmental justice' neighborhoods as the residents face disproportionate environmental health burdens; and

Whereas, For example, 78 percent of Brownsville residents are Black and the neighborhood has the highest rates of adult asthma and the lowest life expectancy in the City of New York; and

Whereas, On December 3, 2020, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called on National Grid to halt the North Brooklyn Pipeline project, stating it was unnecessary and that the environmental impacts on Black

and Brown communities could not be justified; and

Whereas, Gas pipelines present an infrequent but present risk of fire and explosion, with a 350-per square inch (psi) gas pipeline requiring an evacuation radius of approximately 1275 feet; and

Whereas, The MRI project is a 350-psi pipeline that is a transmission and not distribution line, and will not service the communities where the pipeline is located; and

Whereas, Fracked gas pipelines present a host of health and safety risks from explosion or leakage of toxic materials such as methane, benzene, and radon; and

Whereas, According to FracTracker, in 2019 there were 614 reported pipeline incidents in the United States, resulting in the death of 10 people, injuries to another 35, and about $259 million in damages; and

Whereas, Until January 2015, New York State did not allow the construction of new LNG facilities for decades, following a 1976 explosion on Staten Island that killed 40 workers; and

Whereas, Methane leaks are even more common than explosions and pose significant health risks to residents living along pipeline infrastructure; and

Whereas, A July 2018 study published by the journal 'Science' found that the domestic oil and natural gas industry leaked an estimated 13 million metric tons of methane a year from various points along a respective supply pipeline, a leakage of 2.3 percent of total gas produced and a 60 percent higher leakage rate than the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had estimated, at 1.4 percent; and

Whereas, In July 2019, KEDNY and KEDLI were subject to enforcement proceedings after the New York State Department of Public Service uncovered 1,616 state safety violations over a three-year period, mostly related to a natural gas pipeline in Queens, including improper installations that led to gas leaks and plastic pipe fusing that failed inspections; and

Whereas, Expansion of natural gas pipelines would further lock New York City into dependence on fossil fuels to meet our energy needs for decades to come; and

Whereas, While burning natural gas for fuel emits less particulate matter and carbon dioxide (CO_2) than

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burning coal or oil, natural gas is primarily comprised of methane; and

Whereas, Global methane emissions averaged 576 million metric tons per year for the decade of 2008 to 2017, which is an increase of 9 percent from the decade prior; and

Whereas, Methane traps heat far more effectively than CO_2, with a global climate warming impact of more than 80 times that of CO_2 over a 20-year period; and

Whereas, Methane leaks further negate any emission reduction gains made by switching from coal or oil to natural gas; and

Whereas, The December 8, 2020 'Short-Term Energy Outlook' by the United States Energy Information Administration forecasts that the share of electric power sector generation from natural gas will decrease from 39 percent in 2020 to 34 percent in 2021, while electricity from sources of renewable energy will rise from 20 percent in 2020 to 21 percent in 2021; and

Whereas, The State of New York and the City of New York can meet their GHG reduction targets by investing in the growing clean, renewable energy sector instead of approving rate increases for the MRI fracked natural gas pipeline; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Public Service Commission to deny a rate hike and all fossil fuel infrastructure development for the Metropolitan Reliability Infrastructure project.

NPJ
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1/20/20

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