

People's Hearing on the Ferc

Testimony of James O. Michel, Resist the Pipeline, Boston, MA

Good afternoon. My name is James Michel. I am part of a group that has spent the last two years resisting the construction of Spectra Energy's West Roxbury Lateral pipeline. The Lateral is a 5 mile spur off the AIM project. It cuts through the towns of Westwood and Dedham before entering the West Roxbury section of Boston. Designed to carry fracked gas at 750 psi, it makes its way through a densely populated urban neighborhood, past several schools and nursing homes, terminating at a massive M&R station located directly across the street from an active blast quarry. The quarry blasts occur weekly, and many local homeowners can point to foundation cracks and other structural damage. In a logical universe, regular seismic events right next to a high pressure transmission pipeline might be seen as a formula for disaster, but not in FERC world. Early in the process when the community started to understand what was being proposed, we learned that the EIS, prepared by GZA, a consulting group with a history of working with Spectra, had been accepted by the FERC. A computer simulation was enough to satisfy the FERC that the project did not present excessive risk. When the community, through intervenors, asked to revisit the issue, presenting evidence from Mark MacDonald, an independent natural gas safety expert, that said that repeated seismic activity could indeed impact the structural integrity of the pipeline, the FERC granted a tolling order that allowed construction to proceed as they mulled the request – which of course was denied many months later. Please consider: locating a high pressure pipeline in an urban setting adjacent to an active blast quarry is not worth a second look!

Equally egregious is the FERC's refusal to look at the larger picture. There is a strong case to be made that the real strategy for the multiple Spectra projects snaking their way across MA and the northeast is to export the product to more lucrative overseas markets. National Grid, the utility that filed documents with the FERC to justify the project, stated that it anticipated a 2500% increase in demand for gas in the next decade, despite the fact that there has been a flat/downward trend correlated with Massachusetts' aggressive energy efficiency programs initiated under the Global Warming Solutions Act - landmark legislation passed in 2008. National Grid, as it so happens, is a partner with Spectra in developing the northern route to Nova Scotia, where LNG facilities previously licensed for import are now licensed for export.

Before I understood the gravity of the human caused climate crisis, I worked as clinician and policy maker in the behavioral health field. My resistance colleagues here today include an IT project manager and yoga teacher, a city planner/communications professor, and a seminary trained United Methodist minister/climate justice organizer. None of us set out to become conversant about energy policy, the Natural gas act of 1938, or FERC procedures – yet here we are. We are grass roots volunteers. We are Lilliputians, trying hard to tie down the great Gulliver that is the fossil fuel industrial complex. In a better world, the one we are hoping to create, an agency such as the FERC would be delighted to see engaged citizens such as us, and would think that exists to serve us. It is an honor to be here with you

all, my fellow Lilliputians. Let's keep working together to wake up American society, and unite in the struggle to preserve a viable planet for future generations.