

Testimony of Nancy S. Vann at the People's Hearing

Washington, DC - December 2, 2016

My name is Nancy Vann and I live in Peekskill, New York. I'm a retired Wall Street lawyer. And for the last three years, I've had an unexpectedly 'close encounter' with a pipeline. The Spectra AIM pipeline (FERC docket CP14-96). It's kept a low profile so not everyone knows about it. Not low physically of course. It's 42-inches in diameter, about the height of a 5-year old child. It's used eminent domain to take property we own - cutting down 313 trees and wrecking a wetland - all without independent review. From the outset I was told we probably wouldn't be able to stop the project. After all the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") has only turned down one application in 40 years. But I was determined to try.

There are many reasons fracked gas pipelines shouldn't be built. But the most important reason for stopping this pipeline is its proximity to the Indian Point nuclear power plant - a mere 25 miles north of NY City on the banks of the Hudson River. You'll hear about the plant's potential 50-mile fallout radius from nuclear expert Paul Blanch. But we know that the AIM pipeline greatly increases the probability of a 'Fukushima-on-the-Hudson' catastrophe that could make NY City uninhabitable for millennia.

So why *did* FERC approve the AIM project?

First they relied on an environmental review by a company with a serious conflict of interest you'll hear about later. Then they failed to even plausibly evaluate a risk assessment from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, an agency with no expertise in pipeline safety.

And FERC ignored all of our objections: during the 'scoping' period and to the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements. They also ignored letters from our Senators and Members of Congress. They ignored letters from our Governor and four NY State agencies. In fact, FERC ignored letters and submissions from elected officials at every level of government in the four impacted States (NY, CT, RI, and MA). The Commissioners weren't even willing to listen to my remarks about the pipeline's dangers as I was forcibly dragged out of a nominally 'public' FERC meeting just for trying to explain.

True to form, FERC rubber stamped the AIM approval.

Then the City of Boston, the Town of Dedham, Riverkeeper, and our own coalition of 28 groups and individuals filed Rehearing Requests. FERC ignored them all - for more than eight months - while the pipeline construction proceeded rapidly.

No one is even allowed into court to challenge the validity of an approval until FERC has responded to a Rehearing Request. And of course FERC eventually said "no." Our Federal lawsuit is finally proceeding but the AIM project is nearly finished. So three unelected FERC Commissioners have enabled the destruction of life, land, and safety across the U.S. without any accountability. FERC must be investigated before it's too late - not just for us in New York - for our country, our world, and our very survival.