

PUBLIC HEARING:
ATTENDEES IDENTIFY ISSUES FOR PUC TO ADDRESS REGARDING
THE VGS PETITION TO CONSTRUCT A NATURAL GAS PRESSURE-REGULATION STATION IN MONKTON
CASE NUMBER 17-4904-PET

A public hearing was held in Monkton by the Public Utility Commission's ("PUC") on January 8, 2018, regarding the petition by Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. ("VGS") to construct a pressure-regulation station in Monkton, Vermont (case 17-4909-PET). Of the approximately 20 attendees, 9 provided public comments expressing the following concerns:

1. The PUC should postpone any decision on the proposed station until VGS conducts a study to determine how many customers will use the distribution line into Monkton that will connect to the station. This study should be based on a prospective customer survey that informs potential residential customers of estimated costs to convert their heat source to natural gas and reflects the current and projected future prices of natural gas as compared to other fuels.
2. The access road to the proposed pressure-regulation station would be built in the vicinity of the former town dump. VGS needs to assess the impact of the site's prior use as part of its proposal.
3. Notice of the public hearing was not provided at least 12 days prior to the hearing taking place, as required by statute. An additional hearing that is properly noticed should be scheduled to ensure greater public participation.
4. Construction of the distribution line that will extend from the pressure-regulation station to the residents and businesses of Monkton will interfere with traffic, disturb the neighbors, and have a negative impact on the historic qualities and environment of Monkton. The PUC should know how many customers will actually connect up to the distribution line before permitting the regulation station.
5. The Town of Monkton entered into a memorandum of agreement with VGS that agreed to the Monkton distribution line in September 2013. The cost of gas has gone up since then. VGS should verify that the Town and its residents still want the distribution line.
6. The pressure-regulation station is proposed to be built in the vicinity of wetlands. Why isn't it being built elsewhere?
7. Natural gas has recently been shown to be a dangerous greenhouse gas. Building more fossil-fuel infrastructure is expensive and disruptive. The cost of converting a home to natural gas is uncertain but growing. Cold climate heat pumps are becoming the primary and most environmentally sound source of home heating such that fossil-fuel furnaces simply serve as supplements to heat pumps during periods of extreme cold. Given these factors, the PUC needs to assess whether, as a policy matter, it is appropriate to continue fostering the growth of natural gas use as part of Vermont's energy future.

8. In making its public good determination, the Commission should assess not only the profitability of the proposed project for VGS but the overall impact of the new infrastructure on the people and the environment.
9. The Commission needs to be especially vigilant about safety concerns and not trust VGS or the Vermont Department of Public Service to ensure compliance with gas safety requirements.