

## CLIMATE SCIENCE DEMANDS HALT TO KILLINGLY POWER PLANT

When the Covid-19 pandemic first hit our state – hard – Governor Lamont appeared wearing a mask that read “Science Will Win.” In his approach to Covid-19, Lamont has relied unceasingly on scientific data, sought close collaboration with neighboring states, and communicated important information to the public. Guided by science, he is demonstrating exemplary leadership in navigating the pandemic.

Contrast this Covid-19 response to climate science and fossil fuel policy in Connecticut. It is obvious that science is not winning. Although there has been important progress in the creation of renewable energy sources and decreasing energy demand, as well as a recently announced multistate plan to address carbon-dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from the transportation sector, fossil fuel infrastructure in Connecticut continues to expand. Most glaring, we are facing the imminent build-out of the Killingly Energy Center, KEC, a 650-MW natural gas power plant in northeastern Connecticut that is not needed, at a cost of over \$600 million.

How can this be? Science has established fossil fuels as the primary cause of global warming. KEC would knee-cap any chance of reaching Governor Lamont’s goal of 100% carbon-free power by 2040. At full capacity, KEC would produce 2.2 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, or 13% of Connecticut’s CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The backer of this plant, NTE, claims KEC has value as a “bridge fuel” to provide energy “when the sun doesn’t shine and the wind doesn’t blow.” This decades-old justification was refuted in 2019 by Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Commissioner Katie Dykes at the annual conference of the League of Conservation Voters. The Commissioner declared, “Natural gas is a fossil fuel, not a bridge fuel.”

There is demonstrable evidence that Connecticut does not need a new fossil fuel power plant. Electricity use in Connecticut has flattened in recent years, primarily due to increased efficiency. In addition, Independent Systems Operator – New England (ISO-NE), the electricity grid-manager for six states, reported an excess [region-wide] system capacity for 2018 of over 1,000 MW, even without accounting for growing solar and wind contributions. Furthermore, at the current rate of technological advancement in carbon-free energy generation and power storage, KEC could soon become a toxic dinosaur.

Concerned residents of Killingly and a growing network of advocates throughout the state have opposed KEC since its inception. By the time Lamont took office, plans for the project were well underway. In late 2019, Lamont expanded the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3), and charged the Council with formulation of comprehensive climate recommendations.

The GC3 offered the prospect of a hard look at fossil fuel policy in the state. Therefore, I was eager to set eyes on the recently released final report of the GC3’s Electricity Working Group.

I was *stunned* by how the report addresses KEC: “Connecticut soon will be home to the Killingly Energy Center....” (Chapter 4, Electricity, page 79). How could KEC *possibly* be presented in terms equivalent to what I would call “a done deal?” One glaring reason to object to the assertion is that there is an outstanding permit application with arguably substantive environmental issues still to be aired in a public forum. In addition, there is a

KEC-related case pending before the State Supreme Court. Either could bring a halt to the project.

As further basis for incredulity, the GC3 report admits that KEC “does not align with Connecticut’s decarbonization policy objectives; and its long asset life will make it challenging to meet the state’s emissions reduction goals.”

And remarkably, the GC3 text on KEC acknowledges, “Throughout development of this report, stakeholders indicated their strong objections to this project [KEC] because... the plant will lock in decades of carbon emissions and will negatively impact the health and well-being of the surrounding community.”

Who, then, authored the text that presents KEC as a done deal? I don’t know the answer. What I do know is that membership of the Electricity “Working Group” is impressively weighted toward gas companies, with DEEP staff as chair. (See Appendix 1, “Members of the Electricity Team”, page 98).

It is unfortunate that the administration preceding Governor Lamont left him a legacy of active expansion of natural gas in Connecticut. But the inevitable environmental impacts of this plant coming on line demand action now. Partly through satellite images, we have been alerted to massive leaks of methane both from the process of fracking to obtain natural gas, and the transmission and burning of natural gas to produce electricity. Since methane is at least 25 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> in contribution to global warming, these leaks are huge red flags.

Why then allow KEC to go forward?

Both Commissioner Dykes and the GC3 report place responsibility for KEC on the Connecticut Siting Council and ISO-New England. In contradiction, a recent statement by ISO-NE spokesperson Matt Kakley made clear that “the state – not the ISO – determines if a plant gets developed within its borders.” Dykes’ blame game demonstrates a blind eye toward KEC and its harms.

Governor Lamont has stated, “I don’t think we need [KEC] for Connecticut... I’m trying to figure out whether we need the plant at all,” and indicated his intention to confer with neighbor-state governors. Notably, at the same time that KEC got the initial go-ahead, application was denied for a new gas plant in Burrillville, Rhode Island. And at that time, Rhode Island’s Governor Raimondo stated it was not needed.

I join many others who have worked for years to oppose KEC in saying “NO.” *This plant*, as well as further expansion of fossil fuels in Connecticut, must be stopped. Connecticut residents need the GC3 to exhort Governor Lamont, and Connecticut’s legislators as well, to say “NO” to KEC.

I want to live in a state where climate science wins, and policy is determined by what we know about the toxic role of fossil fuels. Going forward with KEC would amount to climate denial as glaring as the Covid-19 denial seen in the refusal to wear a mask or to observe physical distancing.

The GC3 *and* DEEP have a duty to act. Respectfully, I implore them to compel Governor Lamont in every possible way to do the right thing, in accord with climate science, and stop the Killingly fracked gas power plant.

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