

Gemela McClendon
Executive Director, Philadelphia Gas Commission

November 5 2018

To Ms. McClendon and staff

Thank you for extending the public comment period on the proposed LNG terminal at the Passyunk Avenue site. **I write to you in opposition to this proposal.** As I stated in my comments at the end of the public advocate hearing on October 29, the overall problem with the proposal extends well beyond the terminal itself. It is the entire reliance of fossil gas as a source of powering and heating homes. **Originally touted as a bridge fuel, gas is actually delaying the urgency to move toward renewable energy** sources such as wind and solar which comprises maybe 1% of Pennsylvania's energy needs.

There are at least two specific issues in the proposal that needs to be addressed. First is the 25 year lease to operate this liquefaction terminal. The proposed project cost of \$60 million to operate a fossil gas terminal for 25 years simply ignores what the scientists tell us about the shorter time frame we have to avoid catastrophic damage to the environment if we continue to burn gas. That \$60 million is rate payer money (could be in New England or overseas ratepayers) that could be used by the public for tax credits or other uses to foster the development of wind, solar, geothermal, hydraulic and tidal power. It is likely, 25 years from now that gas will become obsolete as the public starts to take climate change seriously and demand, albeit belatedly, that they are tired of the flooding and hurricanes. Philadelphia and its gas developers will be stuck with a stranded asset.

Second, there is no mention of methane leaks which we know is a potent greenhouse gas and is 86 times more potent than CO₂ in warming the planet. Even small leaks can have serious consequences. FLIR cameras are not mentioned in the City requirements in order to ensure that there is 24 hour monitoring for methane leaks and there must be a requirement for remediation if leakage occurs.

The City is being praised for a purchase agreement to buy the solar power from Adams County for city buildings but the most shocking news in the press release is that this will be new construction. That is, no one in Pennsylvania is moving to build more solar, wind or other renewable sources because of the influence of the

gas industry in suppressing the development of renewable energy and the lack of political leadership to expand solar and wind in a huge way across the state. Yet we are spending billions of dollars to build the gas pipelines and using eminent domain to seize people's properties in order to build the pipelines to transport pressurized gas. Those billions should be used to build the regional grid for renewable energy.

You are probably aware of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel report released last month on Climate Change (IPCC) which essentially says that we have 12 years to transition away from burning fossil fuels in order to prevent catastrophic sea level rise, hurricanes, flooding and drought across the planet.

Philadelphia, while fortunate to be in a more temperate climate, is not immune from the consequences. In fact, just this past week, I received an emergency alert of a tornado warning over Chestnut Hill - an alert that I have never seen before. Catastrophic flooding could put the Philadelphia airport under water as well as the Navy Yard, water up to FDR Park and the river wards along Port Richmond and Bridesburg under daylight flooding.

I know that the Gas Commission does not consider climate change under its jurisdiction and sees that burning natural gas as a political issue beyond your purview, but in truth, **the Gas Commission needs to be part of this solution and have a serious discussion of how we plan to electrify our buildings and move us away from gas.** We need to see the goal of the Gas Commission as planned obsolescence and start downsizing the gas infrastructure in the next decade. Time is short and we need to be doing this now beginning with denying approval of the LNG terminal. The opportunity to redesign our energy for the 21st Century has never been clearer.

Walter Tsou, MD, MPH
Executive Director
Philadelphia Physicians for Social Responsibility
Former Health Commissioner, Philadelphia Department of Public Health