

Pipeline project suffers setback

Nassau board rejects subdivision request it cites as incomplete

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Nassau

Nassau planning officials tossed a monkey wrench last week into a natural gas pipeline project by refusing to consider a property subdivision sought for a critical gas compressor station off **Clark's** Chapel Road.

On Tuesday, the town **Planning Board** voted 4-0 that property owner **Winchester Holding** LLC failed to file a valid subdivision application because its application made no mention of the planned 41,000-horsepower compressor station — an industrial use on land now zoned for farming — and did not include a detailed environmental review befitting such an industrial project.

Winchester Holding is a limited liability corporation that owns 168 acres on both sides of Clark's Chapel Road. The LLC is controlled by Nassau resident **Thomas F. Hanson** Jr. and has as its legal address the law offices of Kinderhook lawyer **William J. Better**.

In last week's board meeting, Chairman **Sam Critton** said Winchester's application to carve out 112 acres to be sold is incomplete because the subdivision request did not reflect the "industrial use" from a compressor station that would push gas through the proposed 30-inch Northeast Energy Direct pipeline.

A retired lawyer for the state **Department of Environmental Conservation** said the planning board action could subject the NED project to the State Environmental Quality Review Act, beyond the current federal oversight from the **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission**.

"We are happy with this decision," said **Charles Sullivan**, a Nassau resident whose home is about 1,200 feet from the NED route. He said subjecting the project to SEQRA would be "a pretty significant step" that would require further effort to protect human health and the environment. Sullivan worked at DEC for 27 years, with nine of those years as head of environmental enforcement.

The 320-mile NED project would connect fracking fields in northern Pennsylvania to Boston with a 30-inch pressurized pipeline that would come through the Southern Tier, and pass through Schoharie, Albany and Rensselaer counties on the way through Massachusetts and New Hampshire to reach Dracut, Mass., north of Boston.

The proposed compressor station on Clark's Chapel Road is one of nine such stations needed along the pipeline route to keep gas moving eastward.

In Rensselaer County, the NED line would cut through parts of Schodack, Nassau and Stephentown. It was initially proposed to run farther south, through Columbia County and the Berkshires of Massachusetts. This year, project developer Kinder Morgan, a Houston-based energy company, moved more than 50 miles of the proposed route farther north amid increasingly vocal public opposition in the politically potent Berkshires.

Plans call for the pipeline to travel east from Wright, Schoharie County, in an existing Kinder Morgan pipeline right of way through the Hilltowns and Bethlehem before crossing beneath the Hudson River at Schodack and continuing eastward.

The revised route follows a **National Grid** power line right of way northeast from Schodack, south of Burden Lake and close to the intersection of routes 43 and 66 at the hamlet of Alps.

From there, the pipeline would continue north of Route 43 in Nassau and Stephentown for 14 miles before crossing into Massachusetts at Hancock, about 10 miles north of the previous Berkshire proposed crossing

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