

When I first heard that our town of Burrillville was being selected for yet another power plant I found myself doing the same thing that I am sure the majority of people in this room were doing. I needed to understand how this was going to impact my family. Aside from my belief that disturbing this area of untouched land, some of the last in the state, was simply criminal and unjust I had to understand what type of immediate and long term impact this project would have on my family.

My first step was to understand exactly how close everyone is to this project. I quickly learned that my house, located at the end of Camp Dixie Rd isn't so far away as it seems. It is just within a 3 mile radius. In fact the entire center of town is within the 4 mile radius.

I started researching the air pollution that is expected from this plant. There are many images that have been shared showing how far the pollution will spread. The majority of Burrillville sits in the darkest shade on the chart representing the highest levels of pollution. The problem is these charts are wrong! The real life scenario will be much worse. To get a clear picture of the impact you need to remember to overlay this map with the air pollution that already exists from our existing power plant and compression station in town. When will enough be enough?

In an interview with John Niland, Director of business development for Invenergy he explains that this is the perfect location due to the proximity to the gas and power lines in that area. While this may be true when looking at things from a narrow perspective it clearly isn't true when reasonably evaluating the impact to the surrounding area. Perhaps the real reason why this is thought to be the perfect location is because we are rural and they didn't anticipate we would come together as a community to challenge the proposal.

As I continued my research I started reading the lengthy proposal document in detail. My worst fears were realized when it became clear that this proposal was suggesting the use of our contaminated wells in town. On the surface this sounds promising. Invenergy is going to pay the cost to clean the horrible pollution left over from years past. As I am reminded of the events that took place during our water crisis you quickly realize that the mere suggestion of using these wells is a joke.

You see, the plan calls for the use of carbon filters to cleanse the water before it is pumped to the plant, except many are confirming that it will not clean all of the contamination from the water first. This contamination will be sent to the plant, it will be evaporated into the air, and returned into our sewers. It is unclear whether our treatment facility can process this chemical. It is unclear the impact of MTBE in the air. We just don't know.

In fairness, many questions surrounding this topic were submitted to the town. The response we receive is as follows:

*In theory, the water should be free of contamination before it hits the power plant so both the air and water that is processed with well water should also be free of contamination.*

*A preliminary review of the possibility that the MTBE from the contaminated Pascoag well(s) will pollute the sewer discharge shows that it should not be a problem. – because The Pascoag well water will be filtered and cleaned at the well site before it travels to the proposed power plant.*

Basing such a decision on “Theories” is fine for science experiments but when it comes to the health of our town these decisions must be based upon proven practices. We can’t be content that our water “Should be” clean; it must be clean.

The same approach of using carbon filters was used by DEM and the Department of Health when we had our water crisis a few years back. These efforts were eventually unsuccessful as filtering alone was not enough to remedy the problem. It turns out that MTBE is extremely difficult to fully clean from water and poses a high risk of contamination. So high in fact that the Department of Health stated that they would never approve the use of these wells in the future even if tests showed the MTBE levels were within acceptable drinking range. The risk of further contamination to our water supply was simply too great.

This was an extremely strong stance taken by the department of health. We have all accepted the fact that these wells will remain out of service. I don’t recall anyone in the town ever asking for a second opinion. If we did, I certainly don’t want a power company to be the ones responsible and leading the effort. This is like going to the foot doctor when you really need a brain surgeon. Many people in this room have lived through a nightmare that no one should ever have to encounter. I can’t comprehend how someone would ask us to risk this again. While you may think your “theories” are sound if you bring our polluted wells back online I will not be sticking around to find out.

Thank you for your time today to hear our concerns. My hope is that you will listen as well.

Mike Lamoureux