

# Walk for Renewables: Residents question need for proposed gas pipeline

By Beth Treffeisen

On Tuesday, August 1, climate activists marched along the proposed pathway for a new gas pipeline in the Back Bay and the South End. The march was led by the Green Committee of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB) and co-sponsored by the Boston Clean Energy Coalition (BCEC).

The route began at the sidewalk at the Dartmouth Street entrance to the Boston Public Library and followed the sidewalks to end on Belvidere St., near the Christian Science Church. Marchers included, members of the Massachusetts Sierra Club, Mothers Out Front, and concerned residents of the neighboring communities.

"I want to challenge you just a little bit," said State Senator William Brownsberger. "I do believe there is a smell but it is us – we are the smell and the problem; we are the ones using it. Fossil fuels is part of us and part of everything in our community – I challenge us to change."

Brownsberger continued, "When we pay for pipelines we got to say 'no', but if they're building it because we need it – the problem is us."

The local Green Committee of NABB was surprised earlier this summer to learn that National Grid plans to build a new 5,000 foot gas distribution pipeline that runs from the Back Bay into the Fenway neighborhood.

National Grid's plans to create the pipeline are moving forward and are set to begin work this summer. Although the timeline hasn't been made public, representatives from the City say that construction will begin in 2017 and finish in 2018.

Local activists are concerned that this pipeline would prevent Boston from achieving its Climate Action target goals and that it makes no sense to continue to add "dirty energy" infrastructure that will be used for decades when alternative renewable energy sources and energy efficient strategies are available.

"We need to have a clean energy future for both our kids and for our grandchildren," said City Council President Michelle Wu. "Climate Change is here now and effecting our communities now."

Michael McCord, chair of the NABB's Green Committee noted that while Cambridge, Lexington, and Concord have all adopted Net Zero Zoning standards, Boston, is still only requiring new buildings be LEED-certified, a certification not correlated with reduced energy use.

"The BPDA and developers have not moved beyond the standard gas hook-up model for the mostly high rise development boom," said McCord.

He continued saying that business-as-usual is not consistent with Boston's plans to become carbon neutral by 2050.

"Today we have a big problem to solve," said Jacqueline Royce of NABB. "The EPA can be considered the Earth Poisoning Energy... and there is a plan for a venomous snake trying to snake its way under our streets. Let's stand up for our neighborhood!"



Dick Clapp from the Boston Clean Energy Coalition speaks to the crowd about why it is important that they are marching, during the Walk for Renewables on Aug. 1.



Axel Simon holds up a sign to help lead the marchers across a busy intersection during the walk.



Joan Rossetti marches along handing out pamphlets with information on the pipeline and a bright sun in one hand, and a map of the proposed pipeline in the other.



Dressed in colonial garb, a piccolo player and drummer lead the march as activists chant, "Hey hey ho ho – fossil fuels have got to go!"



Pictured to the left, City Council President Michelle Wu addressed the crowd and encouraged activists to continue to fight and speak out to make sure the entire city realizes what needs to be done to make changes for a clean energy future.



City Councilor Josh Zakim speaks to the crowd on the importance of fighting for more renewable energy and what the Boston City Council will be working on this up coming year on the matter at the Walk for Renewables.



Michael McCord, chair of the NABB's Green Committee and Michele Brooks from the Massachusetts Sierra Club march towards the Christian Science Plaza holding up signs against the pipeline and advocating for clean air and water. Pictured to the left, City Council President Michelle Wu talks to residents along with her newborn baby who was attending his first march.