

Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal and Senator Brad Hoylman Submit Testimony to the Maritime Administration and U.S. Coast Guard Opposing the Port Ambrose Liquefied Natural Gas Facility

NEW YORK – Today, NYS Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF-Manhattan) and Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WF-Manhattan) submitted testimony to the Maritime Administration and U.S. Coast Guard in opposition to the application by Liberty Natural Gas, LLC to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) deepwater port facility called Port Ambrose 19 miles off the coast of New York. In their testimony, Rosenthal and Hoylman argued that construction and operation of Port Ambrose would have a strongly negative ecological impact on the environment and urged Governor Cuomo to veto the project.

Assemblymember Rosenthal and Senator Hoylman wrote: “The construction and operation of Port Ambrose would have a strongly negative ecological impact on its surroundings, discharge millions of gallons of chemically treated seawater and require the dredging of miles of sea floor. Port Ambrose would further aggravate environmental degradation by increasing New York’s reliance on natural gas, a methane-emitting fuel.

“This project also has the potential to interfere with the development of a far more environmentally responsible wind farm that has been proposed for this area,” they continued. “We urge the Maritime Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard to deny this application, and similarly urge Governor Cuomo to veto this project and continue to defend New York State’s precious environmental assets.”

Port Ambrose, which is similar to a 2011 project that was vetoed by New Jersey Governor Christie, would consist of permanent ocean buoys from which natural gas that has been compressed into liquid form would be transported via tanker to an offshore plant for regasification and sent to New York and New Jersey through an underground pipeline. The project is now in its final stage of review and is opposed by more than 50 New York State legislators and myriad environmental organizations.

The full testimony can be viewed below:

TESTIMONY OF ASSEMBLYMEMBER LINDA B. ROSENTHAL AND STATE SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN BEFORE THE MARITIME ADMINISTRATION AND THE U.S. COAST GUARD ON THE DEEPWATER PORT LICENSE APPLICATION: LIBERTY NATURAL GAS LLC, PORT AMBROSE DEEPWATER PORT; FINAL APPLICATION PUBLIC HEARING AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

NOVEMBER 2, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the application by Liberty Natural Gas, LLC (Liberty) to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) deepwater port facility called Port Ambrose, roughly 19 miles from the New York shore. We oppose this unnecessary and environmentally irresponsible project.

The construction and operation of Port Ambrose would have a strongly negative ecological impact on its surroundings, discharge millions of gallons of chemically treated seawater and require the dredging of miles of sea floor. Port Ambrose would further aggravate environmental degradation by increasing New York's reliance on natural gas, a methane-emitting fuel. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the leading international body for the assessment of climate change, methane, a dangerous greenhouse gas, is 86 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in our atmosphere over a 20-year period. This is, of course, in addition to the potential havoc wrought to New York's coastline if an extreme weather event, such as another Hurricane Sandy, were to damage a vulnerable offshore facility of this type. Moreover, Port Ambrose could pose a grave security risk for New York. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, liquefied natural gas facilities are a potential terrorist target. Any explosion or fire from an LNG facility in the New York harbor would be catastrophic.

This project also has the potential to interfere with the development of a far more environmentally responsible wind farm that has been proposed for this area. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, an agency of the U.S. Department of Interior, in its scoping comments on the Port Ambrose application, stated that it is "concerned that the proposal to construct a LNG port in the same area proposed for a large wind facility could result in serious conflicts—or at the minimum, complicating factors—that may impact the overall viability of one or both projects." We and many of our constituents fear that this would not be a worthy tradeoff.

Furthermore, Port Ambrose is an unnecessary project. According to the 2014 Draft New York State Energy Plan, domestic production of natural gas is at its highest level in four decades and the "need for substantial increased volumes of imported LNG has diminished for the near term." The Draft Energy Plan further states that this saturation of supply in natural gas has caused imports to decline every year from 2007 through 2012, a year in which just two of the twelve active LNG import terminals in the country received regular shipments.

Opposition to Port Ambrose is growing. Over 50 New York State Legislators have signed on to a letter calling on Governor Cuomo to veto the project, the New York City Council unanimously passed Resolution 549 calling on the Governor to veto the application, and environmental advocacy organizations have expressed serious concerns.

In 2011 New Jersey Governor Chris Christie vetoed an application for an LNG port by Liberty off the coast of New Jersey, stating that “offshore LNG poses unacceptable risks to the state’s residents, natural resources, economy and security.” For these reasons, we urge the Maritime Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard to deny this application, and similarly urge Governor Cuomo to veto this project and continue to defend New York State’s precious environmental assets.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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