

EDITORIAL

Gas pipeline makes sense — just for now

New York State faces a deadline this week to decide whether to grant a water-quality permit for a proposed natural gas pipeline under New York Harbor. If only it were that simple.

The \$1 billion plan to lay a 24-mile pipeline from New Jersey's Raritan Bay to an existing offshore pipeline off the Rockaways has become the latest battle in larger wars being waged over the need to convert energy production from fossil fuels to renewable sources. That's why the Department of Environmental Conservation's decision will be seen as signifying more than a bureaucratic determination on water regulations.

The timing stinks. The pipeline would bring an additional 400 million cubic feet of natural gas daily to Long Island and New York City. National Grid, which would get the gas under a 15-year contract, says it's badly needed. Some environmentalists say it's not.

Grid's argument is more convincing. At this moment. But it won't be further down the road. The transition to wind energy and solar is underway, but not quickly enough to solve today's problems — a lack of gas for heat on peak cold days in winter, for new critical development

projects like Belmont Park and the Ronkonkoma Hub, and for the thousands of customers seeking to switch from heating oil to cleaner natural gas each year.

But gas also contributes to global warming, and we need to wean ourselves off it. So if the DEC says the pipeline's environmental effects on water and marine life will be temporary or can be remediated, the state also must take steps to ensure this pipeline is the last piece of new fossil fuel infrastructure here.

The Public Service Commission is testing Grid's claims by doing a statewide review of gas infrastructure needs. That's good. In December, the PSC accelerated energy efficiency goals for utilities that are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030. That's better. The PSC must keep up the pressure on the utilities it regulates. All options should be explored, including heat pumps, biogas from food waste, and better insulation for houses. In its current rate-increase request, Grid smartly included innovative programs to conserve and decarbonize the heating sector, like geothermal heating and cooling. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo will soon award contracts for large-scale wind farms — 1,200 megawatts is a good guess — which when operating in 5 years or so will allow inefficient gas-fired power plants to be closed. Miles of Long Island Rail Road rights-of-way could and should host solar arrays.

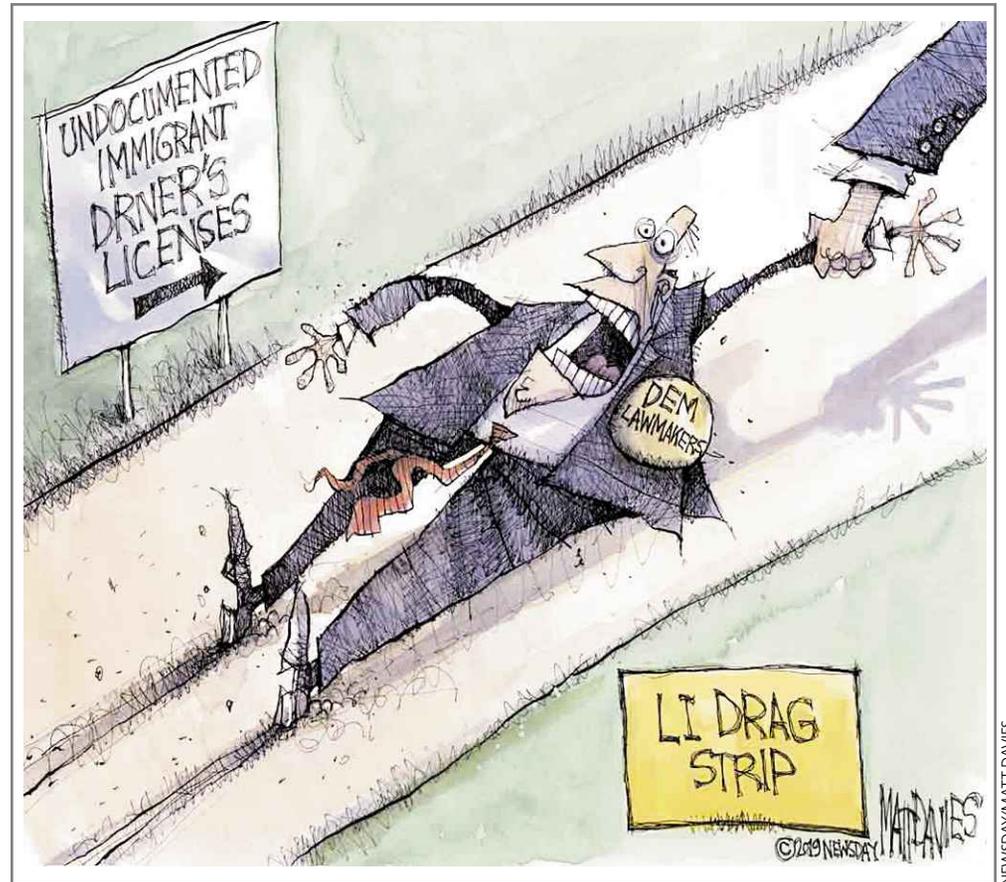
As National Grid's other gas contracts expire in the years ahead, they should not be renewed as these greener measures take hold.

Whatever the DEC rules, the losing side likely will sue on grounds that process was not followed, miring the pipeline in a judicial slog that could last several years. Then, the pipeline would take time to build. By then, the landscape might have changed. Natural gas once was part of the climate-change solution by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Now it's part of the problem by locking them in. Today, it's needed. Tomorrow, not so much.

In letting the gas flow now, the state also needs to make sure we can start closing the valves soon.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Seniors need break on school taxes

In regards to the May 8 news story on increases in school taxes, "Taxes on LI would go up 2.48%," have the school districts ever considered the senior citizen population on Long Island?

When does the tax burden stop for individuals who have paid enough into society? In local stores and shops, you see people in their 70s, 80s and even 90s who should be enjoying life working their tails off to pay their ever-increasing school taxes.

At what point do we stop taxing those who do not have children in school? It's a disgrace.

I believe that when you reach 65, you should pay 50 percent of the owed school tax, and zero when you reach 70. This should be brought up at every school board meeting. We do not need any

more artificial-turf fields.

*James Sandas,
Massapequa Park*

Soon, China won't need U.S. markets

In 2013, China announced a trade policy called Belt and Road, to use highways, rail lines and power plants to link the economies of Asia, Europe and Africa. The plan is to invest heavily in infrastructure across those continents to create a market for Chinese goods should the United States wake up to China's unfair trade policies. At the same time, China can take raw materials from its new trading partners. China never hid its plans.

The United States has done little until now to rock the boat and demand fair trade and an end to technology theft ["Beijing hits back in trade dispute," News, May

14]. Our country has a short window of time to act against unfair trade. In a few years, China will not need U.S. consumers, and our leverage will be gone.

If there is a price to pay, U.S. consumers must pay it as we did during World War II, when Americans did without and rationed goods. We can't be crybabies about this. We either should pay the higher prices for Chinese goods — or don't buy that nation's products.

*Alan Newman,
Bellmore*

LIRR demonstrates contempt for riders

By closing parking lots at Farmingdale station during the PGA Championship, the Long Island Rail Road and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority prove once again that the commuters they are supposed



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