

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE



SENATOR MICHAEL N. GIANARIS
12TH DISTRICT
DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Testimony of Senator Michael Gianaris, Deputy Majority Leader

Department of Environmental Conservation Public Hearing

Re: Astoria Gas Turbine Power Replacement Project

August 24, 2021

I am submitting this testimony to express my strong opposition to the proposed Astoria gas turbine replacement project. This project is an affront to efforts made in New York to combat the climate crisis. This needs to end – for the good of the community and as a critical step in the fight against climate change. The proposed facility does not comport with the goals laid out in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) enacted in 2019, and it would be wrong to impose this burden on a community that has long suffered at the hands of utility providers.

Since our Senate Majority assumed power in 2019, we have made climate justice a priority. Our most significant achievement so far was enacting CLCPA. CLCPA commits New York to an equitable clean energy future – with 70% of electricity being renewable by 2030, 100% carbon-free by 2040, and an 85% emissions reduction overall by 2050. Crucially, at least 40% of investment is reserved for areas that have suffered from climate injustice. These ambitious goals are critical, and they are the law. We must do what it takes to win this clean-energy future, secure a livable climate, and fully fund a just transition for frontline communities.

This proposed plant would run on natural gas – a fossil fuel. The argument that natural gas is cleaner than prior sources rings hollow. It is still a fossil fuel, it is non-renewable, and still emits toxins into the air. The operator’s promise to convert the plant to a hydrogen facility “someday” does not carry water, either, as that technology is questionable and years away from use in any event.

The area where this plant resides is known to local residents as “Asthma Alley” – a portion of the western Queens waterfront where residents have higher rates of asthma than other areas of New York City. Additionally, this area is home to lower income individuals, immigrants, and public housing tenants. It is wrong to burden residents, already suffering the consequences of prior energy generation choices, with even more exposure.

What we need going forward is simple: a transition to a renewable energy future. There is much work left to be done, and the clock is ticking. But we cannot move back in time with this dirty, fossil fuel fired plant in western Queens. We need bolder ideas and just solutions to solve our climate crisis. The proposed NRG fossil fuel-powered plant must be rejected.

