

## Natural gas pipeline through Windsor gets approval



Written by

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WINDSOR -- A pipeline that will connect Marcellus Shale natural gas wells to a major Southern Tier **transmission** line received the green light Thursday from the state, clearing the final regulatory hurdle for the long-debated project.

Laser Northeast Gathering Co., a Houston-based company, will construct a 9.8-mile portion of the pipeline in Windsor, where it will connect to the Millennium Pipeline, which runs across portions of the Southern Tier and Hudson Valley and connects to major markets in the Northeast.

The project calls for a compressor station built on a Laser-owned plot of land between Dunbar and Patterson roads, which led some residents to express concern about potential noise pollution and air emissions.

The New York Public Service **Commission** announced the approval in a release Thursday morning, but just when construction can start and what conditions

will be placed on the project were not immediately released. PSC spokesman James Denn said the full order will be posted in the next few days.

"We are gratified by the action taken (Thursday) by the **New York** Public Service Commission," Laser CEO Thomas Karam said in a statement. "This approval is the culmination of much hard work and professionalism shown by the staffs at the (state Department of Environmental Conservation) and the PSC working with Laser personnel."

When finished, the 33-mile, 16-inch-diameter steel pipeline will run northeast from Forest Lake Township in Susquehanna County, Pa., across the Pennsylvania/New York border and under Route 17 before connecting to the Millennium. It will initially serve as a gathering line for nine Susquehanna gas wells operated by Alta Resources, and will have capacity to serve other wells in the future.

Karam said Laser plans on hiring 175

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union employees to build the project. The company broke ground on the Pennsylvania portion earlier this month, and will begin **construction** on the New York side as soon as the PSC's decision allows.

The company agreed to a road-use agreement with the Town of Windsor, which calls for Laser to put down a \$20,000 deposit and \$2 million bond at the outset, as well as pay for road repairs caused by **heavytruck** traffic.

The project had been in the works for about a year, and had been the subject of debate among some local residents. The compressor station will be located near homes on Dunbar and Thompson roads, and the PSC decision will require the company to comply with the town's noise ordinance, Denn said.

"I just don't see any way that they can get in under the noise ordinance level," said James Lynch, who owns a summer home on the property bordering the compressor station site. "They're basically putting an industrial site right in the middle of a residential area. It's not like I bought a home next to an airport and then started complaining about the noise."

A state Department of Environmental Conservation official recommended the PSC not allow the compressor to raise the noise level more than six decibels, which would require noise-reduction measures to be installed. The DEC also suggested an additional noise evaluation be undertaken if the company wants to add capacity to the station in the future.

The project had the blessing of the Windsor & Colesville Oil and Gas Lease Coalition, which helped negotiate a right-of-way deal between Laser and a group of landowners along the pipeline's route. Land with proximity to major gas lines is valued by energy companies.

"This is a great opportunity for development for **naturalgas** in our area," said James Worden, chair of the Windsor coalition. "I'm very proud of what was accomplished by the landowners and Laser Northeast. Again, when natural gas companies and the landowners work together, it proves to be a positive situation for both. It's a step in the right direction. These pipelines are very necessary for the area, and Laser has definitely stepped up and done everything the landowners have asked."

The PSC decision gives Laser's recently registered transportation company -- DMP New York Inc. -- the **power** of eminent domain for the project, but the company's attorneys notified the commission earlier

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this month it had acquired all of the property rights along the proposed route.

Laser was denied public utility status in Pennsylvania, which would have given it eminent domain in that state.

The pipeline will likely provide connections for Windsor-area gas wells if large-scale drilling in New York's portion of the Marcellus Shale formation is approved. High-volume hydraulic fracturing -- a stimulation technique necessary for shale gas extraction -- has been on hold since July 2008 as the state reviews the environmental impacts of the process and its permitting guidelines, while Pennsylvania currently allows it.

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