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Coalition pushes for natural gas pipeline project

A group of Long Island business and labor leaders pressed the need for approval of a controversial National Grid natural gas pipeline at a press conference in Amityville Wednesday.

The 24-mile pipeline expansion, known as the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project, would increase capacity of natural gas on Long Island, which would accommodate new development and lower costs for area natural gas customers.

Representatives of the Association for a Better Long Island, the Long Island Builders Institute, New York State Laborers' Union and SEIU 1199, the national health-care union, made their case for the \$1 billion pipeline project at the Massapequa Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing, which was denied a request for a commercial kitchen and new boilers because of lack of natural gas availability.

MCRN, a 320-bed nursing home facility, had asked National Grid twice to increase its natural gas supply for the pending improvements. However, the utility responded that it would need to complete the pipeline project before it could approve the facility's request.

Richard Sherman, administrator at MCRN, called the National Grid denial a bitter pill to swallow.

"We are simply trying to provide our residents the services they deserve, like a home-cooked meal, as well as hire potential 20 additional employees," Sherman

said in a written statement.

National Grid had warned that it may need to enact a moratorium on natural gas supply for new development projects or expansions of existing facilities until the pipeline project is allowed to move forward.

Kyle Strober, executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island, said the constraint on Long Island's natural gas supply is causing pain to Long Island businesses and threatening future economic development on major development projects, such as the proposed New York Islanders arena at Belmont Park, the Ronkonkoma Hub and the Nassau Hub in Uniondale.

"Our region needs the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project, as it will ensure that facilities like the Massapequa Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing have access to more efficient natural gas because this obstacle to their business growth is being repeated across Long Island," Strober said in the statement. "This project has the means to significantly strengthen the Island's workforce, allowing far more efficient and available natural gas to assist in building and enhancing future developments."

The natural gas expansion project, also known as the Williams Transco natural gas pipeline, is being opposed by a coalition of local civic and environmental groups because they claim it would cause irreparable harm to the environment and water quality. The 24-mile expansion of the existing pipeline would run 17 miles underwater, stretching from New Jersey

under New York Bay to another existing pipeline off the Rockaways.

The state's Department of Environmental Conservation needs to approve the project before it can be constructed. National Grid, which says the pipeline expansion would increase capacity in the area by 14 percent, delivering 400 million cubic feet of natural gas per day, warned that if DEC approval isn't granted by May 15, it wouldn't be able to guarantee uninterrupted gas service and would curtail supply to new users. Currently, the utility converts about 8,000 customers annually from oil to natural gas.

Advocates say the pipeline project would generate about \$327 million in the region's economic activity, while creating 3,186 construction jobs.

— DAVID WINZELBERG

Lidl to open first LI stores

Lidl, the German discount supermarket chain, will open its first Long Island stores by early next year, according to a company statement.

Lidl, which purchased the 27-store Best Market chain last year, will open new stores in Plainview and Center Moriches and re-brand two existing Best Market stores on Sunrise Highway in West Babylon and Jericho Turnpike in Huntington Station under the Lidl name.

The former ShopRite location in the Morton Village Shopping Center on Old Country Road in Plainview will likely be

the Island's first Lidl supermarket. Ken Schuckman of Schuckman Realty brokered the lease for the 28,500-square-foot Plainview space.

Lidl will also be closing the existing Best Market store on Jerusalem Avenue in Hicksville. The company said it will offer Best Market employees positions with Lidl at the same or better wages and benefits.

Lidl opened its U.S. headquarters in Arlington County, Va. in June 2015. The company operates about 10,500 stores in 29 countries, including more than 65 stores in nine states on the East Coast.

— DAVID WINZELBERG

Stony Brook opens its first IVF clinic

Stony Brook Medicine cut a ceremonial ribbon at Island Fertility, a state-of-the-art reproductive endocrinology and fertility center in Commack, which began seeing patients this month.

The 7,000-square-foot center, which provides in vitro fertilization as well as other fertility treatments and a full range of diagnostic services, is one of 30 specialties at Stony Brook Medicine's Advanced Specialty Care multi-specialty center located at 500 Commack Road.

Island Fertility, which is Stony Brook Medicine's first-ever IVF center, expects to serve 60 to 80 patients daily and can support 2,000 fresh IVF cycles annually.

— BERNADETTE STARZEE

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