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## **Merrimack Town Council makes opposition to pipeline project official**

**By KIMBERLY HOUGHTON**  
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MERRIMACK — The Merrimack Town Council is unanimous in its opposition to a controversial natural gas pipeline, saying the proposed project has too many risks and little benefit to the community.

This week, town officials will review a draft of a letter to Gov. Maggie Hassan and federal legislators informing them of their “strenuous opposition” to the Northeast Energy Direct project being planned by Tennessee Gas Pipeline, a Kinder Morgan company.

The town council is expected to review the letter on Thursday, make adjustments if necessary and then forward it to state and federal officials.

“We may win the fight, we may not. But, I would rather win it fighting for you all the way,” Councilor Lon Woods said following a recent public hearing with representatives from Kinder Morgan.

The pipeline project, if approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, would wind through 4.5 miles of the town and affect about 61 homeowners.

Woods stressed that the proposed route could also negatively affect protected conservation land in town, recreational trails, open space and wells.

“In my mind, there is no measurable value to the town.” said Woods.

The proposed route in New Hampshire includes 71 miles of a 30-inch or 36-inch line through southern New Hampshire, traveling along communities in Cheshire County, Hillsborough County and Rockingham County.

During the recent meeting with Kinder Morgan representatives, Curtis Cole, business development director, said Liberty Utilities is Kinder Morgan’s largest customer in New Hampshire.

“Our project is needed. You have a big challenge in New England,” Cole told the crowd. “You don’t want it — I understand that. But the largest utility in your state has said, ‘we want this project, we have a need for this project.’”

Liberty Utilities chose Kinder Morgan, according to Cole, who said the Public Utilities Commission will shut down the project if it believes there is a smarter choice.

"There is an inherent danger of a pipeline of this size going through the town of Merrimack," said Councilor Tom Koenig, noting the proposed route will travel through residential properties and citizens' yards.

Councilor Bill Boyd argued that it took Kinder Morgan 98 days to schedule a public presentation for the largest community affected by the pipeline in New Hampshire.

"I don't know if it was them being impolite, or a callous disregard for our community," said Boyd, adding his major concern is the wellhead protection area and the 85 percent of residents who obtain their water from the Merrimack Village District.

In a letter to officials in the neighboring town of Amherst, representatives from Kinder Morgan stressed that they are committed to public safety, protecting the environment and operating its facilities in compliance with all rules and regulations.

"Kinder Morgan is proud of its safety record and its compliance with all applicable safety regulations," says the memo. "Pipelines are the safest and most cost-effective means to transport the extraordinary volumes of natural gas that fuel our nation's economy and provide heat and cooking fuel to residential consumers."

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