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To: Dryden Town Board

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I am a resident of the town of Dryden and would like to contribute some thoughts as the board discusses its priorities for the future. Our town was amazing in the way in which it led the fight against fracking. I am hoping that we can show the same leadership in the fight against global warming and in the critical efforts needed to reduce our use of fossil fuels.

Out in California, near Porter Ranch, there is a very large, ongoing leak of natural gas. It was discovered on October 23 and it will still take months to fix the problem. We cannot fix this leak ourselves, but the more we depend on fossil fuels the more this kind of event is going to occur. At the federal level there are those running to be president of the U.S. who say that if they are elected they will throw out the recent Paris agreements. Even if that does not happen, I am pessimistic about national efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and our dependence on fossil fuels.

So we must look and act locally, building a model for others to follow.

First and foremost, we must immediately stop all build-out of pipelines for natural gas. Construction of projects such as the West Dryden Road pipeline are not needed if buildings are properly constructed and this additional infrastructure would only send us in the wrong direction. We must stop adding to the use of natural gas and instead dramatically reduce it.

We must aim at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a way that will keep our planet below a 1.5 C degree increase over pre-industrial levels. Since GHGs remain in the atmosphere for a very long time, quick and strong action is critical. Experts say that actions taken during the next decade will be much more important than those taken 30 years from now. With this in mind, the town should aim for at least an 80% reduction from 2008 levels by 2030, and 100% by 2040.

This will require strong building codes for new buildings throughout the town, insulation of older buildings, and the creation of vast clean sources of energy. The low hanging fruit comes from the savings in green house gases due to increased energy efficiency. So this should be a first target.

The building codes for New York State are quite weak compared to other states such as Connecticut. But towns can strengthen those codes for buildings constructed within their municipal boundaries. I ask that the board look at the existing codes and find ways that they can be improved so that future buildings are much more energy efficient. I also ask the board to look into ways that existing structures can become more energy efficient, including creating a fund that can assist low-income residents in making this transition. Both of these efforts can be of economic benefit for the owners of the buildings – some upfront costs that can more than pay for themselves in the energy saved.

In addition, anything the board can do to support the addition of renewable energy resources will be extremely important. For example, is there a way to encourage land owners who wanted to have fracking on their land instead provide locations for solar farms and earn money in the process? This is just one example of the many innovative ways the town can assist in the development of renewable energy resources.

I want to thank the board for its hard work in the past and hope it will use the Paris agreements as just a starting point for the creative and hard work that will be needed ahead. We must act locally and Dryden has shown that it knows how to lead instead of follow.

Thank you for your consideration.

