

Letter: Think twice about gas plant

The Salem News

To the editor:

Kudos to Sue Kirby and Jeff Brooks for their column explaining their opposition to a Salem natural gas power plant (“There are better alternatives than another gas plant,” Feb. 15). However, their arguments will fall on deaf ears. People who want to build a natural gas power plant after closing a coal plant do not understand how near we are to reaching climate change feedback loops that will push us past tipping points that will make it impossible to stabilize the climate. They are not likely to be willing to consider methane leaks because they are jumping at an opportunity to get cheap electricity from natural gas.

Instead, a different approach would point out that natural gas already provides 68 percent of our electricity, making us vulnerable to spikes in natural gas prices. Based on the logic of “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,” we need to quickly develop sources of electricity other than natural gas. In addition, more power plants using natural gas will push up homeowners’ costs for heating homes with gas.

Furthermore, the environmental movement has vowed to prevent the building of more pipelines that would increase the supply of natural gas to New England. Salem should take their vow seriously. Look how long the Keystone XL pipeline has been held up when everyone assumed it was a done deal.

Finally, the article could have mentioned that companies fracking natural gas are having financial problems. For example, Shell Oil has had disastrous experiences fracking in Texas, Kansas and Alaska. They, along with many other companies, have found that the costs of fracking are much higher than anticipated, and the gas acquired from these wells is far less than expected since most new wells do not produce for more than three years. The recent boom in natural gas supply and drop in prices was artificial, caused by a rush of investors hoping to profit from a thriving new industry, but many have suffered huge losses.

The lesson for Salem: All that sparkles is not gold.

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