

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Bristol Residents Contest Agreement with Vermont Gas Systems**

**Bristol, VT**—Thirty-seven Bristol residents filed a complaint with the Addison Superior Court on August 9. They allege the recent agreement between Canadian-owned Vermont Gas Systems (VGS) and the Bristol Selectboard, which allows for the construction of fracked gas distribution lines in Bristol, is in violation of a Vermont statute.

Attorney James Dumont is representing the plaintiffs. He explains, “the Vermont legislature adopted a law forbidding any Selectboard from entering into this type of agreement without first formally issuing a notice to the public of their right to petition for a binding vote. After being notified of this duty, the Selectboard instead chose to immediately sign with VGS. Superior Court action has been filed to carry out the legislature’s intent that the public be given an opportunity to vote.”

One of the Plaintiffs, Sally Burrell, explains “a natural gas pipeline will affect the safety, property values and environmental integrity of Bristol.

“Natural gas distribution lines, if damaged by forces of nature, digging or aging, can produce explosions with catastrophic effects on people and property. Such accidents occur 124-170 times per year around the country. These lines will complicate the repair and maintenance of existing water pipes and other underground utilities in Bristol.”

According to Gary Smith, another Plaintiff, “Once considered a bridge to renewable energy, natural gas is now known to be 30-100 times more damaging to our environment than oil. The gas escapes into the atmosphere during extraction, processing, storage, transmission and distribution – not during burning. When the gas company says it is a clean fuel, they are just comparing the carbon released when burning gas with the carbon released when burning of oil, which ignores the scientific evidence.”

Burrell points out that “while natural gas is currently less expensive than other heating fuels, there is no guarantee this advantage will last. State regulators control the cost of natural gas and are presently maintaining its low price tag.” She says “State programs like Efficiency Vermont provide assistance with energy audits, weatherization and locally-based sustainable energy alternatives, all of which are better investments, and better for our community, than natural gas.”

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