

MAPC Statement: Updated Weymouth Air Quality Data

May 21, 2019

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has been actively following the current appeal process of the air quality permit for the proposed natural gas compressor station in Weymouth. We have recently learned, as have others, about the additional air quality data (based on 2018 air sampling) that MassDEP shared last Thursday. Based on our initial review, the report appears to include new data points, primarily regarding air toxics.

If the new data show that current levels of toxins are already above health protective thresholds, we believe the air quality permit for the proposed station must be reconsidered. Although our state's current permit approval process focuses mainly on the contribution of single sources of emissions (in this case, emissions from the proposed natural gas compressor), MAPC believes that we need to start elevating our standards to be based on cumulative impacts of both current pollution burdens plus emissions from new sources.

We have previously stated our opposition to the proposed station due to potential public safety risks and threats to our region's climate resiliency. If the new data indicate air quality conditions that already exceed health protective limits, the permit process should immediately pause, during which time we encourage the regulatory authorities to consider: a) the cumulative load of toxics, including both current levels plus those that arise

from new sources; b) potential public safety impacts on the surrounding communities, in the event that the compressor and surrounding infrastructure fail to operate according to industry standards; and c) the overall impact of the compressor on greenhouse gas emissions, and the Commonwealth's ability to achieve its goals under the Global Warming Solutions Act.

Finally, the release of the new air quality data from MassDEP suggests that more information could have been made available during the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) process conducted by MAPC. All HIAs are based upon a snapshot of information provided at the time the HIA is drafted, and therefore, the conclusions of any HIA cannot be assumed to hold if new information comes forth, particularly new data that may suggest an increase in risks to people's health.