

January 25, 2018

To the Charlotte Planning Commission and Zoning Board:

I was going to come to the hearing last night about the proposed gas station on Route 7, but I am battling the flu, and I don't want to prejudice everyone against my comments by being a disgusting, dripping, coughing, sneezing Vector Of Plague And Suffering.

So, here are my written, disease-free comments in advance:

I am speaking out in opposition to the proposed gas station project due to the increasingly urgent need to address climate change, and the need to incorporate that reality into all of our civic decision-making.

Just today I had a conversation with a friend of mine named Kimo Goree, who does science-based, non-partisan climate communications for the International Institute For Sustainable Development. He's been reporting on international environmental action for the last 25 years, and is intimately involved with the annual Conference of Parties, where the world comes together every December under the banner of the UN to engage in the highest level climate negotiations.

He's responsible for doing the massive amounts of fundraising which support his team's efforts, and most of that support comes from a wide variety of countries. Kimo told me that for the last 5 years, his largest donor (*very large*) has been, unexpectedly, Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi government and royal family understands that the oil boom which has so greatly benefitted them for decades is coming to an end, and that climate change is a significant threat to the well-being of their country and the entire world. They regard their support of Kimo and his team's work as a powerful signal to the rest of the world that they're taking the threat of climate change very, very seriously.

Kimo said the Saudis understand that the fossil fuel party is over because fossil fuels are such an enormous contributor to climate change, and that it's important to turn the page on this era of burning ancient carbon as quickly as possible.

The entire world has come to understand the same thing. Norway - an oil producing nation - is divesting from fossil fuels, New York State is suing Exxon-Mobil for outright lying about their climate data, and over the last year, a coalition of US Attorneys General have filed nearly two dozen lawsuits—about two a month—against the federal government, seeking to uphold legal climate protections.

Even the venerable insurance institution Lloyd's of London just announced it's implementing a coal exclusion policy as part of its responsible investment strategy.

This is all to say that the last thing anyone - any person, town, or organization - should be doing is approving or investing in fossil fuel infrastructure, and a gas station most definitely falls into the category of fossil fuel infrastructure.

Vermont has a plan, approved by the legislature, to drastically reduce carbon emissions and get to 90% renewable energy across all sectors by 2020. That's two years from now - a very short

time frame - and building a gas station on Route 7 definitely does not contribute to achieving any of the state's climate goals.

While the town of Charlotte is a tiny, little player in a very big world, what we do here matters. What we do matters scientifically, ethically, emotionally, and spiritually. Even though we can't solve climate change on our own, we still have a moral obligation to being a part of the solution, not contributing to the problem.

Much as it's been politicized, climate change is not a political issue. Chemistry and physics don't care who you voted for or what you believe or how much money you stand to make. All chemistry and physics care about is the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.

This planet already has far too high a concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and I encourage Charlotte to be a part of the solution - or at the very least - not actively contribute to ramping up the problem.

Thanks for all your hard, devoted civic work.

Sincerely,

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