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BCW to hold meeting on natural gas shortage in lower Westchester

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Rye Brook, NY Con Edison's announcement on January 18 that effective March 15 it will no longer accept new natural gas customers in rapidly developing lower Westchester County due to a severe shortage of available supply, is a wake-up call for all who are focused on the economic present and future of Westchester and the entire metropolitan area.

In light of Con Edison, the Business Council of Westchester will immediately organize a campaign to bring together the best minds from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to address the natural gas shortage crisis head-on and present viable, practical solutions.

"As the leading business membership and advocacy organization in Westchester, the Business Council of Westchester takes its responsibility to our members and the greater community very seriously. While the shortage announcement came as a surprise, it shouldn't have. The supply crisis has been in the making for years as virtually any attempt to add major new natural gas capacity to the region has been either rejected or drowned out by calls for finding new alternative energy sources instead," said BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon.

"All of us share in the desire to shift away from carbon fuels to renewable forms of energy. However, realistically, this is not going to happen overnight. In the meantime, natural gas is the best and least objectionable energy source and a plentiful supply is available. The problem is that there is insufficient transmission pipeline capacity to get it to us. This is a self-made problem that can and must be addressed immediately. Con Edison has the ability to deliver gas but it is unable to access additional supplies," she added.

Gordon said that while there is plenty of blame to go around for letting the situation reach a crisis, at this point the BCW strongly believes that the focus must immediately turn to evaluating what steps can be taken in the shortest term possible to assure adequate natural gas is made available. "Anything short of this will quite literally cripple the development and redevelopment efforts that have finally taken hold most notably in the downtowns of our major urban centers, and that is not a viable option," Gordon said

The BCW will form a taskforce comprised of representatives of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. The taskforce's charge will be to explore and make specific recommendations on how best to address the gas supply shortage so that economic growth is not brought to a virtual standstill.

“We are committed to turning our full resources to addressing this crisis in the coming days by bringing together the leaders of state, county and municipal government, Con Edison, the PSC, the gas pipeline transmission companies and the development community for an emergency meeting,” Gordon said.

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