



RIVERTOWNCOALITION

FOR CLEAN AIR AND CLEAN WATER

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Dear Members of the Board and Staff Leaders of SEDA-COG,

We took a break over the holiday to be in touch with all the real people who are the reasons we do this work and who are impacted by our choices. We have also received your letter of December 21 and reviewed it at our meeting. Thank you for a thoughtful response. We too recognize that we have some areas in common and others that diverge. From the beginning these letters have been sent as an educational outreach on our part. We know that you are busy people and have limited time to do research. We have a few more topics we see as important to present.

We want you to know why we are writing to you and not to someone else. *First* is that you are representing and working for the people of Pennsylvania and we are in that group. Your first loyalty is not to a specific business interest but to us. *Second* we see the RGUI as a project with potential that can be adapted. *Third* we know we are addressing a paradigm shift, and the smaller the scale of the beginning phase, the more likely the effort is to succeed. *Fourth* Location, location, location. And *Fifth* Timing, timing, timing.

To elaborate on each point:

- 1) As you stated SEDA-COG tries to take a balanced, multifaceted approach of the issues affecting our area. We want to trust the system of governing we all live under to actually work for the **common good** versus special interests. We want to emphasize that the health of the people and the land is for the common good.
- 2) It is our view that the RGUI should be an **REUI**. That means **Regional Energy Utilization Initiative**, which is a genuine study that looks at how to integrate all forms of energy available in our area and broaden the base of this study to **include more of our local business interests**. Instead of only gas (and the associated environmental and health damages) also include solar, geothermal, biomass, wind and hydro (with the environmental advantages of each). We already have such businesses operating in our area.
- 3) The **paradigm shift** is to make a genuine commitment to sustainability, which requires a balance of many elements, (see the diagram below). You note the challenges of balancing many considerations. We feel that this model helps to clarify those conflicts and keep a focus. The negative impact of the gas industry in Pennsylvania on the social and ecological sectors is not lessened by creating a larger network and greater demand for gas in our area. The thrust of RGUI is in the Economic circle of the diagram. To compare this to the Rural Electrification Act seems to be comparing apples and oranges. Electricity is not a fossil fuel. It serves a different function than fossil fuel. Gas does not have a position that cannot be replicated by other energy sources. There are economic reasons for concentrating on renewable energy options. One example: geothermal energy provides a savings of 40% to 70% on utility bills. The Environmental Protection Agency has called geothermal heat pumps, the most energy-efficient, environmentally clean and cost-effective heating and air conditioning systems available.¹ It is also in balance with social and ecological implications.
- 4) **Location!** Our area is a good place to implement a paradigm shift. If the money ready to be invested in gas expansion were directed to alternatives, we have people already working in each area of the sustainability model easily available. We have **local businesses** using and installing the various energy sources. Current renewable energy projects work most efficiently on a **smaller scale** and the RGUI is addressing such a population. We have **multiple universities** with the resources of time and talent in each of the sustainability areas, who are currently working together on environmental concerns.² We have access to students from all over the world to influence to stay and work with an exciting and forward looking project. We have an underutilized workforce prime for creating new areas of **job development**.³ We have a large network of environmental groups who could be called upon to support the shift and we have many churches that could address the moral issues of such a change of mindset. Perhaps most important is that **we have a world-wide stage** to demonstrate that even in the center of a gas heavy state it is possible to look to the future and innovate. This kind of shift is already happening in places in the U.S. like Burlington, Vermont and countries like Germany. We are embarrassed that people we have personally met, come to Pennsylvania from other

countries specifically to view the adverse impact that Pennsylvania's development policies are having on our environment and return home to describe the problems we have created here.

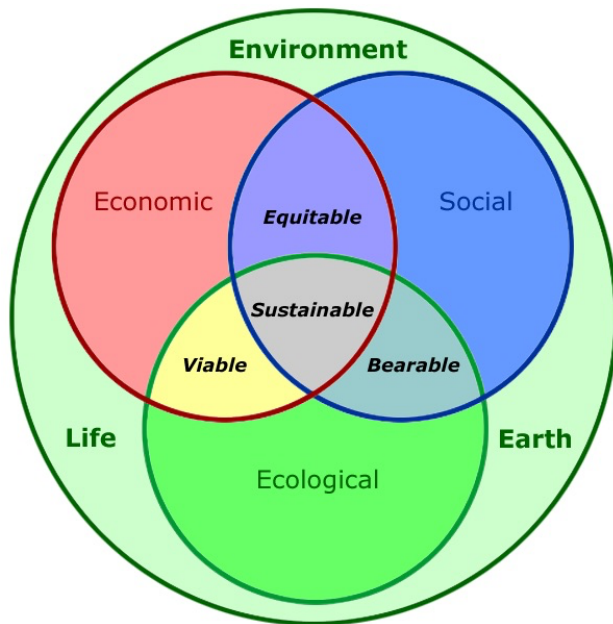
- 5) **Timing!** Public awareness is high with the global and national discussions on climate change. The pipelines for gas exports are not in place, **there is time** to redirect resources. We have power plants proposed in our area that could be included in the study to develop ways to **integrate dispersed energy generation** into their operating models and be a genuine move to the future. We could take advantage of federal money available through the Clean Power Plan. If you want to draw new businesses, offer them a new energy-conscious support structure for their efforts. Larger corporations already calculate energy efficiency and carbon impact in their business decisions because it is cost effective.⁴ It makes financial sense to use renewables and to maintain or enhance rather than create more costs to repair our environment. Once the money is invested in more of the fossil fuel sector, it will be that much longer until we can move forward. The care for the environment is of particular need in our state where agriculture and tourism are major economic resources. And of course it is good business to keep your workforce healthy. It is the right time and Central Pennsylvania is the right place to adapt. We would like to embrace the future instead of hanging on to the past.

Respectfully,

Carol Parowski, President
Shirley Rowe
Mark Heuer, PhD
Peg Lauver

Lana Gulden
Rev. Mary Peterhaensel

The Board of the Rivertown Coalition for Clean Air and Clean Water



¹<http://contractingbusiness.com/site-files/contractingbusiness.com/files/uploads/2014/11/GEO%20Comments%20to%20EPA.pdf>

²Susquehanna River Heartland Coalition for Environmental Studies <http://conservationcatalysts.org/members/susquehanna-river-heartland-coalition-environmental-studiesunassessed-waters-project-srhces>

³<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/articles/2015/01/fact-sheet-renewable-energy-job-numbers.html>

⁴<http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/23380-forecast-2016-corporate-responses-to-climate-change>