

False Narrative on Home Heating Initiative

Have you heard of fake news, where some source, not necessarily mainstream, creates a false narrative that is easily dispelled with a small amount of research? Currently, here, we have a large piece of fake news that's being spread around town that if Proposition 4, the Home Heating Reclamation Act, passes then we will get sanctions from the EPA. Sanctions are a complete red herring when it comes to Proposition 4, which is only about who creates rules and enforces them.

The EPA doesn't care about who is in charge with regards to Air Quality, it only cares about attainment. If attainment in its time frame isn't reached then we will get sanctions. That's it, period. What this ultimately means is that we will get sanctions. I believe whole-heartedly that we can solve the PM 2.5 issue, but it's been amply demonstrated and modeled that we can't possibly solve it within the EPA's timetable with the level of technology that the EPA will allow us to use. We will progress from "Best Available Control Measures" to "Most Stringent Measures" and then on to harder sanctions before we are able to reach the extremely low amount of PM 2.5 that the EPA has set as a standard.

By the way, another false narrative is that the standard it is using is from the Clean Air Act law. That is also untrue. It's a regulation that it has modified to an extremely low level, which is what started Fairbanks' whole PM 2.5 nightmare.

One more false narrative is that those who burn wood are responsible for this whole situation. Even the politically motivated stakeholder groups is talking about having us switch to ultra-low-sulphur diesel for those who heat their home with oil. This is estimated to add over 40 cents a gallon to fuel costs.

The final deception I want to address is that stopping this proposition will keep local control. That is a complete myth. The EPA and DEC have made it very clear to the assembly that we have to implement their rules, so there is no local control, there's only local enforcement. In other words, we pass the rules they want, then our taxpayers have to pay to enforce those unproductive rules. This puts more of an economic burden on our community and ultimately will drive more people to use solid fuel to heat their homes so they can afford to live here.

If Proposition 4 passes, the DEC will become responsible for enforcement and they will have to pay for it with state funds derived from the oil industry and investment income, not property taxes. What the farce of "local control" has got us is just a divided community where people blame the borough for its lack of or misuse of action.

I won't leave you with this without letting you know the solution. Just like with the days of IM inspections for cars that were completely useless, it was technology that changed things around. The technology of electrostatic precipitators can solve both the woodstove and oil stove contributions to the airshed. The only problem is that the EPA hasn't bothered to investigate the already proven technology (used all over Europe) and won't allow the Borough to make it an official part of its program.

The Assembly took the step last week to get some testing done on these devices hoping that the EPA might wake up and start looking into this solution themselves. These devices would solve the problem, but unless you had a government entity that actually exerted local control and implemented them anyway, it won't happen.

In the end, I'm asking you to look at the reality, remember history, observe current events and vote YES on Proposition 4. The Borough will still be allowed its most effective measures - education about proper burning and the wood stove changeout program. We've seen very good results from those programs, yet the EPA won't credit us for the actual percentage of improvement because they have a "policy" that they won't count more than 6 percent from voluntary measures, no matter how good they work. Vote for what works, vote "Yes" on Proposition 4.