

# Debunking the 5 Myths of Mariner East

## DAILY LOCAL NEWS

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This week, residents of Chester and Delaware Counties will get their day in court on the Mariner East pipeline project.

Of course, Sunoco/ET would rather they didn't.

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) Administrative Law Judge Elizabeth Barnes is set to hear testimony directly from citizens regarding potential dangers and the lack of a sufficient emergency notification system or management plan in the event of a pipeline-related disaster.

Meanwhile, Sunoco/ET is again attempting to silence residents by trying to block their testimony and derail the hearing. Their lawyers even submitted a motion contending that only experts (often on their payroll), not ordinary citizens, should be able to testify.

In our region, state legislators, county officials, and the vast majority of impacted townships, homeowner associations, and residents aren't buying it. After all, they're living with the threats of Mariner East every day.

Despite that unity, one former public official, Earl Baker, has come out in support of Mariner East and Sunoco/ET. For those who don't remember, Baker served as a state senator nearly 30 years ago before abruptly resigning because, according to news reports, he said the job didn't pay enough. Today, while he acts like he's still office, Baker is some sort of lobbying consultant and, most recently, a mouthpiece for Sunoco/ET.

Here are five myths that Baker and the natural gas lobby attempt to propagate about Mariner East 2. Expect to hear them at this week's hearing and in the future:

**MYTH 1: Mariner East transports energy and will help make Pennsylvania and American energy independent.** The truth is Mariner East is not keeping your lights on or heating your house. It is carrying hazardous natural gas liquids to be transported to Europe for plastic manufacturing. That's right – millions of single-use plastic products.

**MYTH 2: The Mariner East pipeline project is the safest way to transport natural gas liquids.** Yes, pipelines are safer than truck or rail. But you know what's even safer? A pipeline that is properly planned, that doesn't run through high-density communities, that hasn't been beset with geological problems and instability concerns, that isn't made up of cobbled together pieces of 80-year-old and new segments, and that has automatic shut-off valves and other safety

mechanisms. And yes, an emergency notification system and actual management plan would help, too.

**MYTH 3: Increased pipeline safety will jeopardize Mariner East jobs and its economic impact.** The idea that a pipeline can't be both safe and an economic boon is just plain wrong. Increased oversight and safety should lead to more jobs. Judge Barnes said as much in her order last May in the complaint I brought before the PUC: "Safety and proper engineering design benefits workers and families which reside along the pipeline . . . If the pipelines can be built in a safe manner, then that benefits all."

**MYTH 4: Senator Dinniman wrongly challenged Mariner East in his case before the PUC.** Judge Barnes granted me legislative standing in a May 21, 2018, interim order. It should also be noted that multiple local government officials have used public resources regarding the need for increased oversight of and safety on Mariner East, including the Chester County Commissioners, who are suing Sunoco/ET, the Chester County District Attorney, who is filing a civil nuisance action against the company, and Delaware County Council, which spent \$115,000 on a risk assessment of the project, not to mention other state legislators, schools boards, and townships.

**MYTH 5: Senator Dinniman is the ringleader of the fight against Mariner East.** The movement against Mariner East is powered by a growing number of residents, many of whom have had their homes and lives negatively impacted by it. Yes, I represent my constituents, but they don't take their cues from me. Anyone who thinks otherwise is grossly underestimating them. And at the end of the day, Sunoco/ET, itself, created the backlash against Mariner East by driving entire communities against the project through carelessness, callousness, and arrogance.

These are the mistruths, falsehoods, and outright lies that Sunoco/ET and its mouthpieces, like Baker, are rolling out in a desperate attempt to spin Mariner East's abysmal safety and environmental record.

My message to them is simple: focus on fixing the ongoing problems with Mariner East (including, most recently another reported sinkhole and damage to an aquifer) and addressing our extensive and well-documented safety and environmental concerns, instead of waging a failing public relations campaign. Sure, you can try, but you won't silence me and you won't silence the people.

*Andy Dinniman, of West Whiteland, is the state Senator representing Pennsylvania's 19<sup>th</sup> District and a member of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee.*