

## **STATEMENT AS PREPARED**

**Message from Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera, North Andover Town Manager Andrew Maylor,  
and Andover Town Manager Andrew Flanagan**

### **Regarding the November 19<sup>th</sup> Gas Restoration Completion Date**

Today we know what we have assumed for some time- that the plan rolled out approximately one month ago to replace all gas heating units, water heaters and other appliances and then “Re-light” all homes and businesses in the impacted area by November 19<sup>th</sup> is no longer possible. The goal of that plan was to safely restore heat and hot water to those impacted. Given the complications that have been discovered since the original plan was rolled out would extend the completion date well beyond any date acceptable to our residents, a new plan was needed that would meet the goal of safely restoring heat and hot water as quickly as possible. After consulting with the state fire marshal and the Commonwealth’s head of inspectional services, it was agreed that in many cases heating units can be repaired. We have been told that one plumber can repair one boiler/furnace in three hours where the current replacement is taking three or four days in order to meet all code requirements. This increase in productivity along with the dramatic increase in the number of plumbers now under contract with Columbia/NiSource will make meeting the original target date for restoring heat and hot water still possible for some while for others extending that date by up to two to three weeks. All stoves and dryers will be installed no later than December 16<sup>th</sup>. The new plan also calls for all heating units that will be repaired to be replaced in a process that will begin after the winter.

We have no doubt that for many of the residents and businesses that remain impacted this must be frustrating news. It is frustrating for us as well. In many ways this new plan raises new questions that will need to be answered. When exactly will my heating unit be replaced? Will I have the option to move my gas service meter? Who do I call during the winter if my now repaired heating unit breaks? How does the repair effect the warranty on my boiler? When will my driveway or lawn be repaired?

The city and both towns have been advocating on behalf of the residents and businesses impacted since this disaster occurred and will continue to do so. To expedite meeting the date established in the original plan we made decisions based on verbal commitments from Columbia Gas. Given that there is a new plan, one which extends well into next year, verbal commitments will no longer be acceptable. The city and both towns expect at a minimum the following from Columbia Gas:

1. That a written agreement be drafted which very specifically identifies what each resident/business can expect from Columbia Gas and when. That agreement (contract) should be provided to each customer impacted.
2. That Columbia Gas continue to provide the necessary resources to respond to service questions and claims. These resources must remain local.
3. That Columbia Gas create a financial incentive for residents that will have their heating unit temporarily repaired if they choose to hire a local plumber or other qualified contractor to replace the repaired boiler over the winter.
4. That Columbia Gas commit to the curb-to-curb replacement of ALL roads impacted by the gas main replacement work associated with this disaster.

It should be noted that a current Department of Public Utilities order includes a penalty of up to \$1,000,000 per impacted property if Columbia Gas fails to meet their obligations to complete the work required.

Although given today's news about a new plan, it is important to note that the gas main replacement phase is nearly complete and the service line and meter replacement will also be complete well prior to November 19<sup>th</sup>. Also, the work of the Chief Recovery Officer Joe Albanese and his team continue to find creative ways to solve problems and to challenge those on the project that have underperformed is important to recognize. Without his leadership and the leadership of the Governor and his team, we would not have made the progress we have made to date.

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