

MINUTES OF A JOINT MEETING
BETWEEN THE SANFORD CITY COUNCIL,
AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOARD
IN THE WEST END CONFERENCE ROOM
CITY HALL
225 EAST WEATHERSPOON STREET
SANFORD, NORTH CAROLINA
March 1, 2012
5:15 P.M.

The City Council met jointly with the Lee County Environmental Affairs Board, on Thursday, March 1, 2012, at 5:15 P.M., in the West End Conference Room. The following people were present from the Sanford City Council:

Mayor Cornelia P. Olive	Council Member L. I. (Poly) Cohen
Mayor Pro Tem Sam Gaskins	Council Member Walter McNeil, Jr.
Council Member Rebecca Wyhof	City Manager Hal Hegwer
Council Member Jimmy Haire	City Clerk Bonnie D. White
City Attorney Susan C. Patterson	Jane Smith
Dr. Jim Foster, Chairman	Brooks Gage
Mary Ann Holt	Craig Shore
David Silvey	Ray Martin
Ophelia Livingston	Richard Hayes, Lee County Commissioner
Angela Baker, Administrative Services Coordinator	
Bob Bridwell, Planning and Development Director	

Absent:

Council Member Charles Taylor
Council Member James Williams

Mayor Olive called the meeting to order.

Dr. Jim Foster, Chairman of the Lee County Environmental Affairs Board (EAB) said that this committee started in January 2011 studying the extraction of natural shale gas through speakers, conferences and reading articles. They are not experts but they are continuing to learn a lot.

About three weeks ago, they met with the county manager and city manager to see if the committee is focused on what the governmental entities want them to be focused on in order to help them plan for the possibility of retraction of natural shale gas in our community. Two things came out of the meeting on February 8. One was they asked the chair to draft a letter (attached) to the Legislature Study Committee on Energy. The second was to have a meeting of the governmental entities with the Lee County Environmental Affairs Board such as this meeting. On Tuesday, February 28, they met with the elected officials from Lee County Commissioners and the Town of Broadway.

Dr. Foster said the letter relays to the Legislature Study Committee on Energy that the community that is going to be impacted by this process should be involved in the process. The letter was ended in the same tone.

Mayor Olive expressed Council's appreciation for the work the EAB is doing and the investigative nature that the board has taken. She supports the recommendation and findings of the Board and the council would like to have input in whatever area the EAB needs.

Dr. Foster said they need to establish some baseline data before they get started. Hopefully, everyone working together can open up influence with the Legislature to see that this happens. The USGS is already doing water-well sampling. They have about 95 drilled wells. As of today, they have signed up 52 wells. They are giving priority to those wells that are near the gas wells that were drilled several years ago. They are also giving first priority to about twenty of them and the others are to be within the area of where the shale is located. This will get them started on the water-well baseline data. Dr. Foster stated that he would like to have the water tested in the stream that flows through that area. Mayor Olive felt that the main concerns were baseline data, property owner agreements, roads, and anything to protect our landowners.

Mayor Pro Tem Gaskins asked what are the depths of the wells? Ray Martin replied 200 to 300 feet. Ray Martin referred to a map showing where the wells are located.

City Manager Hal Hegwer said that last week, they talked about what the city might be able to do with water infrastructure regarding the concerns with the wells. Staff has contacted a consultant who is talking with the North Carolina Rural Center (which is a government-funded agency) to see if there are any grant opportunities available for the city to study to see where we could install water lines in these areas in the county so that it will not be as problematic.

Dr. Foster said that 9,000 acres have been leased in the county. The landowners need to know what to do. They need to have an attorney to go over the lease because everything in the lease is negotiable. He said there is not much legal expertise on this subject. Mayor Olive said that Conservation of North Carolina and the School of Government could give some direction and we need a list of attorneys who know about this issue. Dr. Foster stated that Jeff Ward and two other attorneys went to a conference on this issue.

Dr. Foster said that the wastewater that comes back out of the wells has to be treated and some store it in open pits, which means evaporation occurs. Dr. Foster added that it can be treated; however, a new plant would have to be built to treat it. Ray Martin said that some places use foam made from liquid nitrogen. This reduces the amount of water used from a well by 70 percent. It gets injected into a well and when it comes back out, it comes out like shaving cream.

Martha Girolami, from Chatham County, spoke from the audience against the project and presented a booklet put together titled "Homeowners and Gas Drilling Leases: Boon or Bust?" to Administrative Assistant Angela Baker to copy and forward to the members of the committee.

Dr. Foster said that Campbell University is having a science academy for two to three days and one day will be devoted to the exploration of natural gas. The date is March 23 during the day and you can research it on Campbell's website.

The next Lee County Environmental Board meeting will be on March 27, at 5 P.M., in the West End Conference Room of City Hall.

ALL EXHIBITS CONTAINED HEREIN ARE HEREBY INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE AND MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned upon motion of Council Member L. I. "Poly" Cohen. Seconded by Council Member Walter McNeil, Jr., the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

CORNELIA P. OLIVE, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BONNIE D. WHITE, CITY CLERK