

Public Hearing
New Plymouth City Council
THURSDAY
17 March 2011
6:00 p.m. @ The New Plymouth Senior Citizens Center

On the 17th of March 2011 the city council met in a public hearing to take testimony regarding hydro fracturing of presently drilled gas wells and the continuation of the drilling of gas wells in the delineation areas within the city impact area as well as testimony regarding regulations of such drilling and hydro fracturing of gas wells within the city impact area.

The hearing was called to order at approximately 6:25 pm by Mayor Joe Cook. Council members Esplin, York and Cline were in attendance. Councilwoman Mayer was absent due to a prior commitment. Staff members in attendance included Beau Ziemer and Leon K. Jensen. More than 60 members of the public were in attendance and many testified.

Mayor Cook opened the meeting for public comment.

Lisa Burell, representing her husband Chris Burell, read into the record his report. He stated that he grew up in an oil and gas well area in California and has worked in the oil fields doing several different jobs in the 1970's and 1980's. He stated that he still does not know a lot about oil and gas wells. He stated that he is in favor of gas and oil well drilling. He stated that he is more in favor of ground water contamination accountability. He stated that we need balance. He stated that he thought that Bridge Energy would be good for the community by providing jobs etc. He encouraged his community and Bridge Energy to implement ground water contamination accountability.

Lisa Burell read into the record her statement. She stated that Bridge is doing what many companies could do. She mentioned many people are now interested in mineral rights. She understood that when approval was obtained that fracking was not to take place. Later fracking has become an option that Bridge would like to use. She is concerned that she does not want to take even the slightest chance of ground water contamination. She stated that she believed that Bridge knew how this process would play out as they went to the state. She stated her opinion that the State would feel compelled to keep the company moving forward. She stated that she did not want the slightest chance of ground water contamination. Lisa said that Bridge nor the state is concerned for our safety. There is no regulation in place for our protection. She asked for a hold on fracking to ensure that we can protect ourselves the best we can. She asked for something more than a generic insurance policy and a clause in an insurance policy given to you only if you have mineral rights they want, saying they will follow generally accepted industry practices to protect her water. She stated that it is of little comfort that they will follow all federal, state and local rules and regulations when the county and the state have no regulations. Up until now we have not needed regulations. Lisa called for an established protocol and accountability, which is for Bridge's protection as well as ours. If Bridge cannot comply with it, she then stated that she applauded the city council for slowing the process until there are proper regulations in place. Lisa said that she expects the county to step up and put a hold on fracking until proper regulations are in place. Lisa stated that she did not think there should be the slightest risk to her water, especially if they can't fix it.

Richard Bare – He is an engineer and has been involved with wells all his life. He stated that there is radio active material thousands of feet below the ground. He asked where are the samples which have come from the wells. Where is the material coming out of the wells being stored or move delivered to? He discussed the need for containers to hold the material that oozes out of the ground. He said that he has not read any tests which should have been done. He believes that we have no position due to Bridge not providing us with any information regarding these wells. He asked for sonar testing in the bore hole to discover geo technical properties. When pressure is applied in the hole they could conceivably cause a crack. Have they done an abandoned well survey? He asked many other questions regarding the wells and tests that should have been done but may have not been done. So far he has not seen any information regarding tests that should have been done.

Jared Belanger – Has been working with Bridge since they have moved into the area. He is the mechanical contractor with Bridge and is confident that they are doing a very good and thorough job. He stated that everything that they do is tested, retested and hydro tested against leaks. He believes they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Jerry Coonse – He states that he is a well driller and has been for over 30 years. He is not against the development of any of our natural resources. He is in favor of the correct development of these industries. He stated that he has not seen any regulations for these types of wells. He believes that there should be common ground for those involved to work with. He stated that we need to work with informed people and that there should be better regulations when it comes to drilling gas wells. He called for our need for some assurance from a regulatory agency and inspectors to see that things are being done correctly.

Roxanne Cline – Ms Cline said that she is not against jobs and is hopeful that people get what they signed up for. She said that she is in favor of a moratorium for a period of 2 years. She presented information regarding mini fracking which can be found on the internet at www.api.org. She reported that the current company said that they would not be doing fracking. They have since changed their position. She also reported that well depths have been reported at 10000 feet and at other times 3-5000 feet. She asked about emergency response by our local fire department. She mentioned that jobs have been promised but are they our local people who are getting them. She asked about the location of equipment storage and hours of operation. She asked about who (unrelated persons/companies) will be assuring compliance to the standards which are being drawn up. Roxanne closed by saying that oil, coal and natural gas are not our most important resource, water is, and nothing lives without it.

Paulette Espino – Paulette is a well owner. She testified as to the character of Bridge and how helpful and honorable they have been. She said that they have done everything they said that they would do. She said that there is no drainage or any problems with her water. There is a large pit for drainage and there is none. She stated that they have been fracking for over 70 years. Everything is getting better and better. She said that her place is the first one to be fracked. She reported that there is no contamination from the well which has been dug on her property and that there is a lot of very good information on the internet.

Bo Garbo – He works for Bridge and attended the class which was presented by Bridge the previous evening in New Plymouth. He said that there are 4-5 people in attendance at this meeting who work on the wells. Bo said that they have dug a well right next to his house. His water well has been tested and there has been no contamination. He reminded those in attendance that things change over time and get better. A question was asked from Debbie Buckler about whether or not fracking has been done. Bo stated that Bridge has not done any fracking as yet.

LeRoy Attwood – Asked the question regarding the council if there was to be a decision regarding a moratorium at this meeting. The council responded that this meeting was to gather information and that no decision would be made. He asked if the city was intending on stopping drilling within a five mile radius of the city. He would like to have the company come up and explain the process. Where are the well logs and are soil and mineral samples taken? How do they case and seal the wells? He said that there are only three wells out of one million which have been drilled across the country which have been reported to have failed and those failed as a result of human error. He urged the council and all to seek as much information as possible and not control an industry until we have as much information as possible. He stated that there is more pollution created in this county by agriculture, industry and people driving down the road than any proven science that he has seen from the gas wells, would show you. He urged that we don't destroy an industry that can give us a very good economic base and help us with our energy dependence before we know the facts.

Lorie Tracey – Testified that she has 20 years of well logs on her ranch and that she is constantly tracking her well water. She volunteered to make them available to those who would like to see them. She said that she has worked with Bridge for three or four years and has studied fracking. Lorie said that what is on the internet is not what they are doing. She has not seen any account where Bridge has had an environmental error or fine. She has not found any time where they have had any ground water contamination. She does not think a moratorium is appropriate.

Kim Parsons – Representing Bridge and commented that there is a lot of misinformation and asked that she be given time to visit with the city at a town hall meeting and be available to answer questions.

Ken Jorgenson – Works for Bridge and employs some of the people in attendance. He said that he appreciates being able to work here. He stated that people call him daily looking for jobs. He said that he would like to hire more. He is using Idaho people, some from Ada County, Canyon County and from here. He said that he enjoys working for Bridge and they have done everything that they have said.

Ted Freeman – Expressed his concern about the frack phobia that is going around. He works for Mr. Jorgenson. He explained the fracking process as he understands it. He said that it is a shallow frack at 1800 feet. He commented that the aquifer is from 50 feet to 250 feet. Rainwater, tractors, etc. are pushing the chemicals and fertilizers down and they are much closer to the aquifer than the materials used by Bridge in the fracking process. He stated that cleanliness, thoroughness and integrity are practiced every day. He reported that he knows their track record. He discussed the need for jobs in the area of New Plymouth. There are not enough jobs for our graduating seniors or even half of them.

C Brooks – He is a company owner from Fruitland who does some service work for Bridge and they are on site quite a bit. He stated that they are very professional and clean, concerned about the public and that the rules are followed. They have hired the best people in their field. He said that they do work for the federal government and that he would rather work for Bridge Energy.

Susan Steppe – Susan expressed concern about her community and that the question is what can happen if drilling is done. She is in favor of the economic benefit, but what will it do the community. What about traffic, dirt, construction, public facilities, etc? How will this growth affect our community in the long term? What about law enforcement needs? Who is qualified to oversee all the different areas that will be affected? She asked many other questions. She is concerned about the “what if”. She does not believe that the process has been entirely thought through and the long term affects this activity may have. She stated that this is not about Bridge. She stated that they (Bridge) cannot say that the other companies who may come here may not be as dependable as Bridge. She does not believe that the city or the county is prepared for the many facets of this type of development. She stated that there needs to be some form of controls, fees and safety regulations. She is concerned about what is most important and at what cost. She has 85 signatures for people who want a moratorium until proper controls can be enacted.

Councilman York asked that a representative of Bridge come back to the city and visit with the people, answer questions and address their concerns. It was determined by the council that they would discuss the possibility of another meeting with Bridge for their response to the questions and concerns which have been aired during this meeting.

Blain Cornell – asked if he could see a delineation map, which he has tried to get a copy of in the past. He also expressed his concern regarding his opinion of a threat of the five mile area discussed earlier.

Mr. Tim Hughes – testified that he lives within that five mile area and that he is in support of the five mile area for a moratorium.

Darrell Eldred – Is concerned about New Plymouth trying to set standards for the whole county. He is not in agreement with the five mile area and invited Bridge to come out and drill on his place.

Russ Rhodig - concerned about over restrictions in this process, especially that it appears to be infringing upon people’s property rights.

Councilman Esplin encouraged all who had written comments to turn them in to the clerk.

Mayor Cook thanked all for attended and asked for a motion to adjourn. **Councilman York moved to adjourn the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilman Esplin. The voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.**

The meeting closed at approximately 7:30pm.