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CHEERS AND JEERS

Jeers: To the city of Euless for ticketing residents of apartments for parking in the fire lane after our big snowstorm. Many of the carports had collapsed, and there weren't enough open spaces to accommodate everybody.

— *Laura Plues, Euless*

Cheers: To the Euless Public Works and Parks Department's personnel for the extra manpower and hours they are giving the residents in removing the fallen trees, limbs and debris caused by the recent winter storm. You continue to go above and beyond.

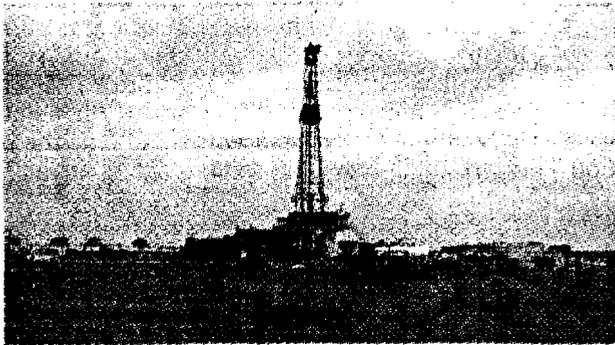
— *Charles S. Coleman, Euless*

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LOCAL ORDINANCES

Cities at odds over gas drilling rules



STAR-TELEGRAM/JOYCE MARSHALL

In a few cases, companies are asking to drill on the edge of one city on sites close to residences or schools in a neighboring city.

The inconsistency could become an argument for moving to a single drilling ordinance for the region.

By AMAN BATHEJA abatheja@star-telegram.com

Cities in Northeast Tarrant County are finding themselves at odds with each other in regulating drilling activities in the Barnett Shale.

In a handful of cases, companies are requesting to drill natural gas wells on the edge of one city on sites that are close to residences or schools in a neighboring city.

Most recently, XTO Energy applied to drill on private property in Southlake, 841 feet from Grapevine High School. Both Southlake and Grapevine have ordinances forbidding drilling within 1,000 feet of a home or school, but the request won't require a distance variance.

"We can't force our zoning onto another city," said Ken Baker, Southlake's director of planning.

But some cities, including North Richland Hills and Fort Worth, say the enforcement of their ordinances does not stop at their city limits.

"We're going to enforce our ordinance wherever it goes," said John Pitstick, director of planning and development for North Richland Hills.

The inconsistency on the issue could become an argument for moving to a single drilling ordinance for the region, according to one major player in the shale.

"If you had something that was more uniform, it would more than likely standardize the process," said Leah King, Chesapeake Energy's senior director of public affairs.

Patchwork of rules

Each city's drilling ordinance spells out dozens of rules including how close a company can drill from habitable structures. The disagreement is over whether cities can apply their ordinances to properties beyond their borders.

The situation has come up only a few times but could become more common, especially in Northeast Tarrant County where drilling activity is picking up and several cities

share boundaries.

"I think the gas companies at first migrated to the low-hanging fruit, the easier sites," said Chris Barker, director of planning and development for Euless. "As this gas play matures, there will be more and more of these interesting cases."

XTO wants to drill on undeveloped land near Southlake's southern border on Texas 26 and Brumlow Avenue. The site is 1,082 feet from the nearest Southlake home but within a 1,000-foot radius of Grapevine homes and Grapevine High School.

Southlake will hold three town hall forums on XTO's application. The first will be on March 30.

Officials with both the city of Grapevine and the Grapevine-Colleyville school district said it was too early to comment on the proposed site.

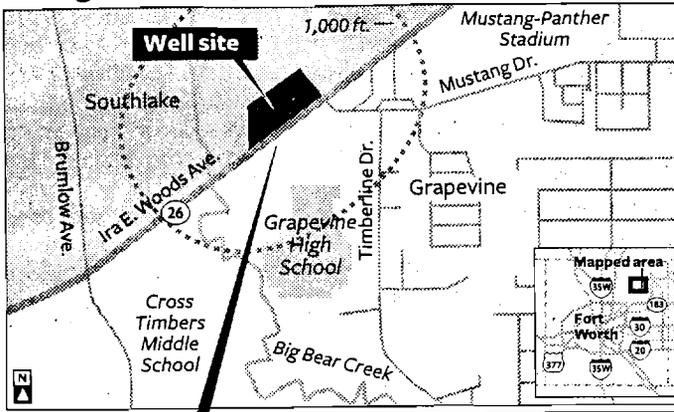
Grapevine's ordinance, which requires wells to be at least 1,000 feet from homes or schools, does not apply to properties in neighboring cities, Development Services Director Scott Williams said.

This is the first drilling application for Southlake, which spent more than a year crafting its ordinance. By the time it was approved in 2008, a plunge in natural gas prices had slowed drilling activity to a crawl.

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XTO gas well request



XTO has requested to drill on 3 acres in Southlake. The site is about 841 feet from Grapevine High School and less than 1,000 feet from a few homes in Grapevine.

STAR-TELEGRAM

Even though Southlake's ordinance doesn't require XTO to apply for special permission to drill close to structures in another city, the issue could still come up in the city's discussions.

XTO did not return a call seeking comment on Tuesday.

Discretion allowed

Compared to Fort Worth and other cities, Southlake's ordinance does give its council more discretion regarding what issues it can consider when deciding on a drilling application, Baker said.

Colleyville took a similar stance in August when Titan Operating applied to drill south of Big Bear Creek. The site was closer to seven Southlake homes than the 1,000-foot limit specified by Colleyville's ordinance.

Colleyville Community Development Director Ron Ruthven said the company didn't need a waiver because the homes were in Southlake.

"We can only govern what's within our own borders," Ruthven said.

Southlake residents protested, and Colleyville's Planning & Zoning Commission put off voting on the application for months.

In February, Titan filed a new request for a site farther than 1,000 feet from any homes. The first hearing on the new application is at least a month away, Ruthven said.

'A school's a school'

Some cities are comfortable applying their rules both within and past the city limits.

Fort Worth has had requests from companies wanting to drill within the city but near homes or other protected structures in Benbrook or unincorporated Tarrant County, said Tom Edwards, a gas inspector for Fort Worth. In those cases, the companies were required to find a different site or apply for a variance, he said.

"A school's a school, no matter where the school is," Edwards said.

North Richland Hills received a request from Chesapeake in 2008 to drill at Little Bear Creek Park. City officials said Chesapeake needed a variance because some homes in Keller were closer than 600 feet to the proposed drill site.

"Whether they're citizens of North Richland Hills or another city, that's the community standards that we want to enforce," Pitstick said.

Following protests from Keller residents, Chesapeake withdrew its application and proposed a new site farther away from any habitable structures. North Richland Hills granted Chesapeake's drilling permit on Thursday, Pitstick said.

The application would have likely been handled differently if the situation had been reversed.

David Hawkins, senior planner with Keller, said the city's ordinance cannot be applied to structures past its bor-

ders.

"Some cities may have in their ordinance that it applies to all structures regardless of whether they're in the city, but ours is not written that way," Hawkins said.

Seeking clarity

For many cities, the rules regarding drilling near city limits aren't crystal clear.

In Euless and Hurst, officials couldn't say whether their ordinances applied to structures in neighboring cities, in part because the issue hasn't come up yet.

Officials with Chesapeake Energy say the competing rules make drilling requests more difficult and time-consuming than they need to be for both natural gas companies and the municipalities. A uniform ordinance would make the process move more smoothly, said Chesapeake spokesman Brian Murnahan.

Murnahan predicted that others may start seriously discussing the benefits of a uniform ordinance as urban drilling accelerates and the questions around it become more complicated. He said Chesapeake wasn't planning to take a lead role on the issue.

"At the moment it's not a lobbying topic for us," Murnahan said. "It's just something we're trying to put out there as a regional suggestion."

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Job fair in Euless

CareerSolutions, a nonprofit group that runs an ongoing series of job-skills workshops in Euless, Fort Worth, Arlington, Grand Prairie and several other locations in Texas and outside the state, will hold a job fair from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. April 8 at First Baptist Church Euless, 1000 W. Airport Freeway.

For more information, go to www.careersolutionsworkshop.org.

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EULESS | CIVIL RIGHTS

Apartments showed bias in renting, ex-worker says

The former leasing agent has filed complaints with HUD and a state agency.

By **DIANE SMITH**
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EULESS — A former leasing agent at a Eules apartment complex is asking state and federal officials to investigate whether the complex committed civil-rights violations by denying apartments to potential tenants with Middle Eastern or Asian backgrounds.

Daniesha Davis, 29, filed a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department in January. The complaint says her employers at Stonebridge at Bear Creek told her to place Middle Eastern and Asian tenants in two buildings at the complex.

When those blocks of apartments were full, Davis said, she was told to turn away Middle Easterners and Asians inquiring about apartments — even if units in other parts of the complex were vacant.

Potential tenants with Middle Eastern- or Asian-sounding names or accents were told “no vacancies” when they called the complex at 2250 Fuller-Wiser Road, Davis said.

“I was told that no one else wanted to live by these people. That they were dirty and they cooked with curry,” she told the *Star-Telegram*.

Nancy Hart, vice president of operations for the company that oversees Stonebridge, strongly denied the allegations.

“We have responded to the allegations, which are totally unfounded, and we feel quite certain our position will be vindicated,” Hart said. “We enjoy all the residents that we have and they represent a wide spectrum of ethnicities.”

Margarita Patterson, who works as a leasing consultant at Stonebridge, said the complex does not discriminate against anyone.

“We are built on a standard of excellence in total commitment to equal opportunity and fairness to all,” Patterson said.

Ty Gomez, a Dallas employment attorney who is representing Davis, said HUD referred Davis’ complaint to the Texas Workforce Commission’s Civil Rights Division.

A spokeswoman for that agency said she cannot discuss or confirm complaints, but Gomez said the agency notified Davis that the case is being reviewed.

Since she filed the complaint, Davis said, her employer reassigned her, which essentially left her unemployed. The reassignment forced her to split her work hours between two complexes and to work weekends, which created child-care is-

sues that made it impossible for her to continue to work there.

“After they learned of it, they retaliated against her,” Gomez said.

Eules’ affordable housing and its location near Dallas/Fort Worth Airport have attracted immigrants from many parts of the world, including Tonga, Mexico, Pakistan, Nepal and Liberia. The city’s international flavor has been touted by city leaders.

But the recent discrimination claims have drawn concern from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a national Muslim civil-rights group. The group urged HUD to take a closer look.

The council is concerned that, if Middle Eastern and Asian people are being singled out, practicing Muslims are among those being discriminated against, said Mustafaa Carroll, president of its Dallas-Fort Worth board.

He said misconceptions about the Muslim community and Islam have lingered since 9-11. He said Middle Easterners and Asians who practice Islam have seen increased discrimination in employment and housing.

Davis said the focus appeared to be on prospective tenants’ nationality and culture rather than religion since Middle Eastern and Asian people were described as “curry people.”

“My heart kind of sank,” Davis said. “I’ve never heard anyone say that before.”

Davis said she was placed in an uncomfortable position and struggled with the issue for months before deciding to file a complaint.

“It was kind of eating at my conscience,” Davis said. “There were just so many people turned away.”

Staff writer Melody McDonald contributed to this report.

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Eules to get Nepalese community center with Hindu, Buddhist temples

March 19, 2010

EULESS -- Long known as a popular place to live for Tongans and other Pacific Islanders, Eules is also a hot spot for Nepalese immigrants.

So much, in fact, that Eules Boulevard will soon be sprouting Hindu and Buddhist temples.

Four acres along Eules Boulevard will soon become a center of worship and culture for Nepalese immigrants and Nepalese-American families. The tract at 2219 W. Eules Blvd. will be the home of the Nepalese Cultural and Spiritual Center. Lush landscaping, the temples and a community center are included in the project, which organizers hope will convey a spirit of peace, friendship and charity.

"We are trying to preserve our culture," said Murali Adhikari of Eules, a volunteer with the center who is helping lead the project. "We are trying to teach the essence of our culture and religion."

Nepal, in Southern Asia between India and China, has about 28.5 million people and is perhaps best known for being home to Mount Everest.

The predominant religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, are practiced by 80 percent and 10 percent of the population, respectively.

Adhikari said people from Nepal have moved to North Texas to pursue economic opportunities or advanced degrees at schools such as the University of Texas at Arlington and North Lake College in Irving. Many have moved to cities such as Irving and Eules, following relatives and friends who moved here first.

Many Nepalese worship at Hindu and Buddhist temples in various parts of the Metroplex. The Eules project is an attempt to offer Nepalese families a central place to meet and worship. Organizers also hope to pass cultural, religious and family traditions to the American-born children of Nepalese immigrants.

"They must understand all those things," Adhikari said.

Nepalese families have been following the project's progress on www.Hamroaawaz.com, which keeps the community informed about local and international events.

"This project ... is one of the biggest projects that anyone has done in the Nepali community," said Chhitij Bhattachan, a reporter for the Web site.

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Construction of the estimated \$1.5 million complex is expected to start later this year. It will be built in phases and is expected to be completed in six to eight years. The community center will include two assembly halls that feature Nepali architecture. The temples will each be 40 feet tall and 40 feet wide.

The community raised \$300,000 to help pay for the property, Adhikari said. About 300 people are part of the community effort, he said.

In January, the Eules City Council voted 7-0 to grant a special-use permit for the project. The project fits with a mix of revitalization and cultural diversity that characterizes Eules Boulevard, said Chris Barker, Eules' director of planning and development.

"It's going to have unique architecture," he said, noting that plans included architectural drawings from Nepal.

Once the temples are constructed, everyone is welcome to visit.

"They are always open," Adhikari said. "You can go anytime you like."

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