

Maryann Stevenson-Township Treasurer in Hickory 4\_08

We probably have a little over 70 wells currently in the township. **So we went from quite farming community to noise 24 hours a day, big massive tri-axle trucks overloaded overweight tearing up the roads.**

We had to have them replace one road already, that was about \$150,000 they had to put into, cause it completely damaged the road from the surface all the way down. **We have mud and debris on the road at all times, we have speeding flying trucks up and down the road, we've had water run off problems because they've torn out the trees and vegetation to put these wells in, the water has no where else to go. We've had a few people loose their wells because of that type of activity.**

**Most of the complaints have been due to the noise**, we don't have a noise ordinance because we are a farming community and the farmers are out early in the morning or out late at night. And garbage trucks are out 4:30 5 in the morning. You can't go creating an ordinance specifically for gas wells. You would have to create an ordinance that would cover everything. And so at this time the board has chosen not to try to regulate noise

The roads are a big problem, although we have had them bond the roads; they have had to make substantial repairs. They got so bad the gas company actually hired their own subcontractor to follow them around and fix the roads. We then went into, I don't know if you've heard of a fracking lagoon, that's how they frock the wells, they use sand and they use water. And they use big pumper trucks, and they are allowed to pump from them continuously, even if the state puts up a water conservation law. Well because they had so many wells going at so many locations they built this big lagoon, 400x400, millions and millions of gallons that was actually pumped from a stream and from a lake nearby.

They would pump the water to take to the well sites; they didn't have enough trucks to run constantly, so they actually ran pipe, miles and miles of pipe to pump into the lagoon. Then the trucks would pump from the lagoon. Unfortunately we knew nothing about them. We've tried to cause so many problems they have had attorneys involved.

We have what's called a universal construction code, according to the code a residence can't put in an above ground pool without permits and inspections, but they can dig this massive 400x400 pit and never once need any permits or inspections, it's insane. We finally had them put up fencing, cause you know kids, and they put up that that plastic. We said what happens if that thing lets loose, and it's on top of a hill. We contacted the DEP, and the DEP out here, there's nothing, it's a gray area, it's not covered by the DEP but we aren't allowed to cover it either. So basically it's one of those things that went through the cracks, that they can do on their own.

Subsidiary to the noise from the drilling process, you have the compressor station, and these compressor stations pump the gas once the unit is drilled, they run 24/7 they never stop.

And the gas and oil well act supercedes all township ordinances, with the exception of noise; otherwise there is nothing we can do. We tried to get them on the compressor stations. It's ancillary to the project, and because it's an integral part of the drilling, they are allowed to have them.

Interviewer: So the only thing you can do is address the noise issue, but to do that would then basically hurt the locals, more so than anyone else.

That's right, because these bigger gas companies, they know "if you're stopping us I better not see a garbage truck out there, better not see a party, better not see farmers out there." they know. When I contacted the DEP to get regulations on a potential noise ordinance, that's exactly what they told me. They said that's right you can regulate the noise by your ordinance, but be prepared you better not in any way shape or form single out the gas well activity, because you will lose.

Interviewer: Has anyone gotten sick?

I can not say if anyone's gotten sick, we have one resident who is fighting with them constantly, and again it's her opinion vs. their opinion, and she says her health is compromised because she never sleeps at night because of the noise. She says they infected her well

with ecoli, they are saying they did not, they gave her a water buffalo to supply the house with water for a limited period of time while they had the well tested, and they maintain that they had nothing to do with the ecoli in the well. We are septic out here also, we have septic tanks next to wells, and they have the opportunity to say you have septic tanks right next to wells, and that's where you are getting all the bacteria in the wells. So they pulled the water buffalo, and she's not using her well, she buys bottled water.

Interviewer: So most of the residents have wells they don't have public water?

No we don't have any public water.

Interviewer: Has crime been affected?

I wouldn't say crime in general. I'd say we've had an influx of people, meaning workers. The company that's doing most of the drilling here is from Texas out west, and they bring their own employees here, and put them up and find apartments for them to live. We've had some calls amongst those employees fighting.

Interviewer: If these people are bringing their own people to do the work then I guess it's not very good for the local economy?

Well that's one thing we brought up, because they touted how it's great for the economy. The only thing it has increased is the three local restaurants. We are rural so they aren't franchises.

Interviewer: But they aren't providing work for the locals.

They are patronizing the restaurants but they aren't employing our people. Its helped business at the restaurants but it hasn't helped our economy per se.

We have had issues with the fire department and the drilling, because they get to these well sites they have to go a round about way to get to these well sites, they have to watch the area they are pulling this gas from to make sure it isn't damaged. So they might be on one person's property drilling, but accessing that property through another

person's property.

And what they use are these little markers on a pole, with the well number, unit number 10 or unit number 3. And that's what these tanker trucks for water trucks and such use. If there is an emergency on a well site, and someone calls 911 and says that they need an ambulance, they'll say we're at unit number 5, and nobody knows what that is. We actually had a guy have a massive heart attack and he died at the well site, cause the fire department couldn't get to him, they didn't know where he was.

Then we had to call more meetings, and had to start addressing these sites, because units weren't good enough.

Interviewer: So basically they are creating more work for your fire department now.

Sure. Another thing with the fire department, they have flaring of wells, I don't know if you've ever seen one, at the end of the process they have to burn off the gas that's left. These big huge tubes that come out of the drilling rig that go up into the air, and it just shoots out fire. If someone's driving down the road and looking off into the woods, and they see this big huge flame, they don't know that they are flaring the well, they think it's a fire. They've had numerous dispatches to these sites for fires, and they aren't fires, they are flaring the wells. And they were told that they need to inform the fire department every time they are flaring a well. And the fire departments code, if they get a dispatch from 911 if it's a fire or flaring a well or just a regular fire, they have to go.

So now you are looking at volunteers, it's hard to get volunteers as it is, and they have to go, and it's not a fire.

Interviewer: And you are jeopardizing the health of other people if there is a real emergency.

Correct

Interviewer: How was it before and when did this current activity start?

I would say probably around 2006 around the end of the year, but then the bulk of the activity was last year.

When you listen to the people who are complaining, to them, the quality of life is, they wanted peace and quite, that's why they came to the country, they wanted to look at the beautiful countryside with the hills and the rolling trees. They feel that has been interrupted. Unfortunately, the way the laws are written, they can be very close to homes. Especially in rural areas like ours, they are letting these companies come on to their land to drill, they aren't feeling the effects, but their poor neighbors who are right next to them are. Sometimes you have neighbors who aren't happy with neighbors.

We don't know any specifics on money, I've heard some people say its not as much as they said it was going to be, but they have a way of saying its how much gas they are pulling. There were two important issues that I was very amazed at,

When you sign a lease, lets say its a 5 year lease, a person thinks at the end of that 5 years, they think that well I suffered through that I'm not going to sign another lease. If that well is still producing gas, they are allowed on your property whether the lease has expired or not. They have to continue that lease. I sure somewhere in the numerous pages of contracts that people don't understand, that they have something about a right of way, that they are allowed onto, cause they have to go out from time to time and service these things.

Another thing there is a gentleman who is in a lawsuit with that right now. He has a lot to say about it, he wasn't willing to follow through with some deals with him, they wanted to buy his property, and he was going to sell it to him. He had a couple of wells on there, and a compressor station. They didn't tell him that the property was more valuable than he thought; he wanted to get a record of income for an average well, to see what his property of worth. The companies don't have to release records for a period of time, I think its one or two years, and he couldn't get the information, and he pulled out of the agreement.

Interviewer: How are the neighbors and the community trying to

address the problems

Well the gas company put on a presentation at the fire department, and invited the community to come, and put on a PowerPoint presentation. Some people were fooled and some people weren't. Most that happens are the complaints here at the township; the board has taken a lot of heat. They don't know our hands are tied. We had great lakes come here, we had our attorney, we had their attorney, we had the DEP here, we had the county conservation chairman here, we had engineers in here, we tried to have them grading permits, that was superseded, we tried to have their sites inspected, that was superceded, cause everything is done by the DEP, all inspections all oversight is done by the DEP. We tried every avenue to try to get something done, and we were defeated every way we did. Unfortunately residents don't know that.

Interviewer: When you say we, you mean the township

Yes.