

July 22, 2010

Cranberry considers amending zoning ordinance for gas drilling

Cranberry's Board of Supervisors has scheduled an August 5 hearing to consider adopting a proposed ordinance that would regulate the location of future natural gas drilling operations within the Township.

Under the draft ordinance, which defines Gas Resources Development and its associated activities, drilling operations could potentially be permitted in zoning districts currently identified as TLI (Transitional Light Industrial), PIC (Planned Industrial/Commercial), IL (Light Industrial), and SU1 (Special Use). Most of the land which falls into those categories is located in the northern part of the Township in areas with minimal adjacency to properties zoned for residential use. That could potentially help to mitigate some of the impact of drilling operations on surrounding property owners.

In developing its draft ordinance, the Township examined gas production-related ordinances from a number of other municipalities in different parts of the Commonwealth and extracted what it determined to be their most defensible elements.

While Cranberry's Board recognizes that natural gas drilling has potentially negative impacts, it is state and federal regulations, rather than local laws, which address those aspects of gas well operation. Municipal governments have only limited and narrow authority to regulate – mainly to zone for gas development activity.

"Under state law, any land use whatsoever needs to be reasonably accommodated and multiple districts are being identified to permit this use," according to Cranberry's Chief Strategic Planning Officer John Trant, Jr. "There are dozens, if not hundreds of acres of property that are covered by these zoning districts that could accommodate this use."

Although the development of natural gas in the Marcellus shale layer has attracted a considerable amount of media attention, Cranberry's ordinance would apply to any sort of gas drilling activity, regardless of its depth or extraction methods. "Cranberry Township has no ability to get involved in issues related to how the drilling operations work, what kinds of chemicals they're using or the other things we keep hearing about in the news," Trant said. "Cranberry Township is focused on zoning for this use, which is appropriately within the Board's ability to regulate."

Older oil wells in Cranberry, most of which sit above exhausted reservoirs, are regulated under a separate Township Code which applies to the extraction of minerals.

The full text of the proposed natural gas ordinance has been posted on our website. The ordinance could be considered for final adoption as soon as September 2.

More information in [The Cranberry Blog](#)

[Proposed Natural Gas Ordinance](#)