

Unit 3: Power



Helis to be a no-show at fracking meeting on Northshore

Heath Allen May 12, 2014

St. Tammany Parish, La. – The heated plan to build a fracking well in St. Tammany Parish is expected to draw another big crowd at a public meeting Monday night.

However, the company hoping to drill the well has turned down an invitation to appear and answer questions.

St. Tammany Parish Councilman Jake Groby said Monday night's meeting is going to be a "beat-up session."

"I wasn't going. I'm not going to all that," he said.

Helis Oil & Gas is seeking permits to drill a test well between Mandeville and Abita Springs, using the controversial fracking – or hydraulic fracking – technique.

Fracking is the technique in which water, chemicals and sand are pumped into the ground to open the avenues to remove gas and oil.

David Kerstein, Helis' resident, was invited to attend and answer questions. He declined.

"They have, I think, seen the other meetings that have taken place, and I think they have sent all the information. They've sent every bit of information to me that I've asked for. I think they are just not comfortable in this setting of that type of meeting," said St. Tammany Parish President Pat Brister.

"The public would like to know how the process is going to be done, and I can't think of anybody better than Helis to explain it," said Groby.

As that meeting prepares to move forward, state Rep. Tim Burns is pushing legislation that would provide more time for parishes to hear public input.

"It allows more local control over it," Burns said. "It'll allow local zoning to control it a bit more to give communities somewhat of a say in how this activity is done."

Burn's bill was defeated Monday.

Brister notes that Louisiana is an oil and gas state and the state has control of the process.

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“I don’t think they will give up easily, no,” Brister said.

By mutual agreement, most everything is on hold until next month, allowing all involved to state cases clearly and understand what’s going on.

However, Groby said that now is a good time to answer the public’s questions.

“Whether it’s at that meeting or it’s another meeting, what kind of venue is it that you cannot simply tell the public what it is you are trying to do? That’s only fair,” Groby said.

Residents in St. Tammany have a number of issues – not the least of which are property values and the safety of drinking water.

Monday night’s meeting is open to the public and begins at 6:30 pm at the Castine Center, in Pelican Park.

Works Cited

Allen, H. (2014, May 12). Helis to be a no-show at fracking meeting on Northshore.

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