



Zoning Ordinance – Gas Drilling Regulations

(February 20, 2009)

On December 9 and 16, 2009, the Fort Worth City Council adopted a new Gas Drilling Ordinance that accomplished the following:

- **Clearer Protected Use Definitions**
- **Noise management** plans; standards for enforcing **low-frequency and pure tone noise**
- **Compressor** setback and noise standards
- **Gas Drilling Review Committee** to provide problem-solving venue for high-impact wells, pipelines through residential areas, and non-commercial truck routes
- Elimination of well classifications and requirement for **same standards** at all wells
- **Deadlines** for installing **landscaping** to drill sites
- **Fracture pond** permitting and regulation
- New **environmental provisions** to reduce emissions from wells and trucks
- Requirements for **surface reclamation plans**
- New pipeline regulations for certain **pipeline routes**; route information for all pipelines
- **Salt water** pipeline standards

Since that time, staff has been presenting revisions to related City Code provisions such as the Fire Code and the Building Code to ensure consistency with the newly adopted Gas Drilling Ordinance. The current Zoning Ordinance contains language that is inconsistent with the Gas Drilling Ordinance and less comprehensive. On February 4, 2009, the Zoning Commission recommended approval of a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to replace inconsistent provisions in the Zoning Ordinance. The text amendment includes the language from the Gas Drilling Ordinance that was adopted after months of deliberation by the Gas Drilling Task Force, numerous public hearings and consideration by the City Council.

The City Council considered the zoning text amendment on February 17th but continued the case until March 3rd to ensure adequate opportunity for public input. The specific provisions are noted below.

Continue restriction of Gas Manufacture, Processing and Storage Facilities to K – Heavy Industrial zoning districts. This covers the large scale facilities such as this location out in Bridgeport.



Clarify that Gas Wells are allowed in all zoning districts. State law defines the mineral estate as the dominant estate over the surface estate. Zoning regulations by the City that prevent the development of the minerals could be a “taking” that would require the City to compensate the mineral owner for their loss. This is consistent with the discussion and practice since 2001.



Restrict stand-alone freshwater fracturing ponds to Industrial and Agricultural districts and reference to supplemental standards. Fracture ponds associated with specific wells will continue to be allowed in any zoning district. All ponds now have screening, fencing, landscaping and site restoration requirements.



Continues restriction of gas line compressors to Industrial and Agricultural zoning districts.

This covers large compressors that push gas down the pipeline and will remain in place throughout the production of wells. Line compressors require a 600 foot setback from any protected use and a 300 foot setback from public buildings and habitable structures. **Requests for a special exception to allow a line compressor in another zoning district will continue to be heard by the Board of Adjustment. Board approval would require a site-plan and conformance to the standards of I-Light Industrial (with the exception of the engine horse power limitation) compatibility with surrounding land uses to be approved.**

- **Exempts line compressors in I – Light Industrial Zoning from the 50 hp limitation of engines.** This provision in the Zoning Ordinance dates back to the fifties to address noise but have not been enforced for line compressors or any other industry in recent years and is under review.
- **Enhances standards in I-Light Industrial due to their proximity to less intensive zoning districts include:**
 - Six foot security fence at least 10 feet from a residential property line or 20 feet from public right-of-way
 - Ten foot landscaped bufferyard along entire boundary with residential zoning; no structures or equipment allowed in this area.

Clarifies separate definition for a lift compressor that is sometimes necessary on a pad site to help lift the gas from the well.

Previously this equipment was treated the same as any other equipment on a well site since they are usually temporary. They now require a 300 foot setback from all property lines of protected uses, public buildings or habitable structures. In addition, noise blankets can only be left in place for 6 months after which more permanent noise abatement structures are required.

All compressors now require screening adjacent to residential uses through masonry walls, landscaping, berms, etc.



Line Compressor



Lift Compressor