

League of Women Voters of Tarrant County
Gas Pipeline Recommendations
January 2008

As gas drilling in the Barnett Shale raises concerns about impacts on water, air, land and lives, the League of Women Voters of Tarrant County urges local Cities to adopt a stringent Gas Pipeline Ordinance immediately. The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Texas Railroad Commission have authority over gas drilling. The Cities, however, have authority over existing and future land use, including the manner in which gas pipeline easements cross property within their jurisdiction.

The pipeline collection system for natural gas (NG) can be visualized as a network of pipes in varying sizes, some as large as three feet in diameter. This network carries the gas from the well to initial dewatering tanks, then to pump stations where the line pressure is increased, transporting greater volumes of compressed NG onward to other processing stages (odorizing the NG), and ultimately into a network of distribution lines to end users. Each drill site requires a pipeline feeding into the collection system. As gas wells increase in number, the gas pipelines multiply – intermeshing with or crossing underground electric lines, water pipes and other conduits, several of which cannot share the same trench.

Natural gas is a highly explosive/flammable substance. Development must be limited around gas transmission pipelines because of the potential for gas pipe failures and/or ruptures, and the resultant explosions and fires. Gas pipeline ruptures are not uncommon. Obviously, the more pipelines, the more chance for a rupture or failure.

At present, local Cities appear to be granting pipeline easements without knowing where the pipelines will begin or end. In Fort Worth, the proposed route of a two-foot-diameter gas pipeline is along an existing rail corridor where The T plans to operate mass transit and construct transit stations. Fortunately, citizens identified the issue, and a City Council member convened a meeting between The T and the pipeline owner to mitigate potential problems. But initially The T had no way of knowing that the proposed easement through Trinity Park could impact their proposed transit stations in Southwest Fort Worth. When assessing gas pipelines, one must be able to see the big picture, not a single easement.

Gas pipeline ordinances are needed to mitigate the safety and land-use risks associated with such pipelines. Ordinances should, at a minimum, include the requirements listed on the attached page.

Application Requirements

Every gas drilling application shall include:

- Name and address of the pipeline owner or operator and principal contact person.

- Name and telephone number of a 24-hour emergency contact.
- Plans showing the dimensions and locations of the pipelines and related items or facilities within the subject right-of-way or easement, as well as all proposed lift stations, pumps or other service structures.
- The origin point and destination of the pipeline and a text description of the general location of the planned pipeline.
- A description of substance to be transported through the pipeline.
- A copy of the substance Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).
- The maximum allowable operating pressure and normal operating pressure.
- Application review by City Engineer, City Attorney, City Manager, and, if required, the City Council prior to permit/easement approval.

Construction and Repair Requirements

- All pipelines shall be constructed out of new pipe.
- Pipeline trenches shall be double ditch backfilled and constructed at a minimum depth of thirty-six (36) inches except in public rights-of-way, where the minimum cover to the top of the pipe shall be at least forty-eight (48) inches.
- The pipeline owner or operator shall give notice forty-eight (48) hours prior to commencement of pipeline construction to all residents and business establishments that are located within five hundred (500) feet of the proposed centerline of the pipe.
- The owner or operator of the proposed pipeline shall post a bond to guarantee that the pipeline will be built in accordance with this ordinance and other applicable law and to guarantee that all surface land will be returned to its previous condition.

Pipeline Operation Requirements

- Every pipeline owner or operator shall provide an annual safety report to the City.
- All pipeline owners or operators shall have procedures to minimize hazards resulting from an emergency.

Public Education Requirements

All owners or operators must have a public education program that includes the location of each pipeline, material transported in the pipeline, how and where to report an emergency, special requirements for excavation near a pipeline, and how to take cover in an emergency.

Violation Penalty Requirements

The City shall impose fines for violations and shall also be entitled to injunctive relief to prevent violation or compel compliance with this ordinance.