
Wales moves to ban hydraulic fracturing

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Wales town officials want to take steps to ban hydraulic fracturing to drill for natural gas. For town residents who attended a public hearing on the matter this week, the ban can't happen soon enough.

Councilman Michael Simon proposed the moratorium on the practice earlier this month over concerns that "fracking" could damage the town's water supply.

The process loosens large natural gas deposits in shale and other unconventional formations. As a result of this method of drilling, the gas production in 2010 reached the highest level in decades, according to a report released this month by the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce.

However, concerns have also risen regarding the fluids used to fracture the rock formations to release the gas. Many of the fluids contain chemicals that can harm the environment and humans if it enters the water supply.

Since Wales relies solely on wells for water, the board's intent is to ban the practice temporarily until a local law can be approved. The proposed law is now in front of the Erie County Department of Environmental Planning, which could take up to 30 days to make a decision before the town can vote on it.

The board plans to vote on the moratorium at its May 10 meeting. Councilman Donald Butcher said he will abstain from the vote due to a conflict with his employer, which has extensive business dealings with energy and oil companies.

Carol Keem, wife of a third-generation farmer in Wales, thanked the board for listening to its residents and noted that it might be too late for her family.

She said they signed a contract to have US Energy drill for gas on their farm, but the Keems last month told the board the process drained one of their pastures and nothing has grown there since.

Chandler Webb, of Maple Hill Road, asked how long it would take to vote on the moratorium. He said an energy company was digging behind his house that afternoon.

Mary Printzenhoff, of Warner Hill Road, thanked elected leaders for taking this step.

“I am proud to live in a town where the people come first,” she said.

Comments

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Every city, town and village in New York State should ban fracking until the industry reforms itself and agrees to submit to EPA and DEC restrictions of fracking fluids and disposal of the discharge.

HAP KLEIN, TONAWANDA, NY on Thu Apr 28, 2011 at 08:23 AM

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