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TARRANT COUNTY

Leader in urban development seeks to make the issues of gas drilling make sense



Participating in the inaugural Dale Resources focus group, held at the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce offices, are (clockwise) local area residents Sarah Walker, Robert Davis, Veronica Sutton and Mitchell Washington. Purpose of the focus group is to help Southeast Fort Worth and surrounding area residents gain a clearer understanding of the natural gas drilling process. *Photos by Glenda Thompson/Gestures Marketing.*

By now, most residents in Tarrant County have heard about the Barnett Shale and subsequent gas drilling going on throughout the area.

The urban areas of Fort Worth appear to hold some of the largest concentrations of natural gas. Some might even agree that the center of the city holds the richest reserves. Such a circumference would include the Southeast sector of the city.

Therein lies the concerns of thousands of residents attempting to get a clearer understanding of the process and how it affects them.

With many questions and concerns associated with natural gas development, the need to provide unfettered access to relevant information within Southeast Fort Worth and the surrounding communities is crucial

to helping residents understand mineral leases and the drilling process.

There are more than a dozen drilling companies in the city of Fort Worth and most have made an attempt to reach residents through general community or neighborhood meetings. There has also been involvement from private companies and law firms that have held community meetings as well.

Most allow for comments at the end -- but for the most part, these meetings left residents with more questions than answers. And most meetings lacked the ability for residents to discuss the issues in a less intimidating environment.

In March, Dale Resources L.L.C. initiated a unique outreach approach to address the issues at the grassroots level. The concept was based on the historical *Fire Side Chats* launched by Franklin Roosevelt in the 30's.

Roosevelt used the radio to simulate a living room chat in your home talking to neighbors. It was a major success in getting information out and still ranks high as a method to reach and engage people.

David Buchanan, Dale Resources Director of Community Affairs, wanted to reach people in a meaningful way to address the issues.

"One of our main goals is to educate people about mineral leasing and the gas drilling process -- to ensure that accurate information is being disseminated," states Buchanan. "We wanted to have a smaller group to engage in a discussion, as opposed to a one-sided big group presentation, and so far our approach has been well received."

Participants agree that this approach was far more effective in helping them to understand the process and enable

them to make informed decisions.

"It's not enough to sit in on a big presentation with emotions running high and really be able to grasp a clear understanding of the issues," says Forest Hills resident Robert Davis. "This (approach) works."

Mitchell Washington, a resident of the College Oaks Neighborhood, sought to gain a clearer understanding about the process. "With so much information out there, I've enjoyed being able to exchange views and gain some accurate insights about natural gas development."

This setting is less intimidating and offers participants an opportunity to talk in a relaxed atmosphere -- minus the emotional concerns traditionally attached to land leasing. Participants are engaged in a reciprocal dialogue so that everyone is free to voice opinions and ask questions.

The final meeting is a tour of a drill sight, which substantiates the information discussed and offers a first hand look at the actual operation. Success is gauged by the number of residents that have a better knowledge of all things associated with natural gas exploration- mineral leases, royalties, drilling and safety.

Dale Resources L.L.C., is a privately held oil and gas company that specializes in urban development, with a core holding in the Barnett Shale -- specifically focused in the urban areas of Tarrant County.

If you're interested in participating in a future focus group discussion about natural gas leasing and drilling, you can contact David Buchanan at 817-451-5353.