

# Murrysville crowd attends meeting on shale ordinance

**Annie Tubbs, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 6-16-11**

A standing room-only crowd of more than 100 people attended a public hearing on a proposed ordinance on Marcellus Shale gas drilling in Murrysville.

The group of residents, energy experts and lawyers before council spilled into the lobby of the municipal building. Blue shirts with "NO FRACKING" printed in red on the back dotted the room.

This was the first hearing on the proposed ordinance, which would limit deep well gas drilling to certain areas and increase environmental protections in the municipality. Three other hearings were held on an earlier version of the ordinance.

Nearly two dozen residents spoke during the hearing. Some spoke of the economic advantages of shale gas drilling and made pleas to council for their rural properties to be included in the area in which drilling would be allowed. Others decried the process as environmentally unsound and urged council to reconsider the plan to allow drilling in certain areas of the municipality.

Several questioned the strength of the language in the ordinance, citing standards segments that state "fractured fluid storage ponds, open pits and reserve pits are highly discouraged" and "best management practices shall be encouraged."

Blaine Lucas, a Babst Calland attorney who represents Consol Energy, said that Consol presently has no interest in drilling in the municipality but said that the ordinance is being viewed as a model. He questioned specifics of the ordinance regarding lighting and noise regulations.

Murrysville Chief Administrator James Morrison said that he hopes the ordinance will minimize legal challenges from the gas industry and added that there are existing codes that would give the municipality control over fees, zoning and noise.

Murrysville resident Susan Stewart-Bayne opposes shale drilling and said she has concerns about the potential damage to the environment.

"I do not want this to become Texas," she said.

"If this doesn't change, I will move and take my family with me."

Council President Joan Kearns reminded those who attended the meeting that the ordinance isn't final.

"It is not an easy chore," she said. "This is a living, breathing document, as is the map," referring to the areas in which drilling would be allowed.

The public hearing was continued until July 6, but Mr. Morrison said another hearing is unlikely.