

# Carpinteria Council Opposes Venoco's Pardon Initiative

*Councilman Joe Armendariz casts the dissenting vote, saying the city shouldn't take an official stance*

**Giana Magnoli, Noozhawk, 2-17-20**

The Carpinteria City Council voted 4-1 at a special meeting Tuesday night to oppose Venoco Inc.'s Pardon Oil and Gas Development Initiative, a symbolic gesture furthering the city's opposition to the slant drilling project.

Councilman Joe Armendariz, the sole dissenting vote, said the council should have stayed out of taking an official stance.

Staff plan to hold public informational meetings regarding the project, but with the city's involvement so far, Armendariz said he doubts there can be — or perhaps should be — city-sponsored meetings on the issue.

Carpinteria lost a lawsuit filed against Venoco attempting to invalidate the ballot measure, but now it's working its way through the appellate court system. The city has spent more than \$300,000 on the litigation so far, and the decision isn't likely to come through before the June 8 election, Armendariz said.

The 69-page initiative was written by the city attorney and is available online, although the last 30 pages are crossed out, as they were deleted by court order.

Venoco collected signatures to create Measure J, which — if it passes by more than 50 percent of the vote — would allow a drilling rig to be built near Carpinteria's City Hall off Dump Road. It would drill directly down and a few miles out along the coastline to access both oil and natural gas.

The City Council had the option of taking a neutral, supportive or opposing stance on the initiative or forgoing a position altogether. Armendariz was the dissenting vote for taking a stance and the opposing stance, but he said he refuses to take a public position on the project.

Revisions to the 19-page staff report executive summary included the question of revenue the county and city would gain from the project if it's approved by voters.

"Because the availability of royalties to the city and county is controlled by Venoco, and subject to interpretation by the state, a remote possibility exists that, except for a nominal sum, no royalties will be allocated locally," it stated.

Most of the crowd at Tuesday's meeting consisted of project opponents, and there have been numerous groups speaking out on either side of the debate.

The Citizens Committee Against Pardon group is one of the most vocal opponents of the project, and members urge the public to get informed about Measure J, with the decision now in the hands of city voters.