

# THE MACOMB DAILY



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**Saturday, May 9, 2015**

\$1.00

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# West Bay set to resume drilling operation

**By Sean Delaney**  
*For The Macomb Daily*

In a letter to Shelby Township attorney Rob Huth, officials with the West Bay Exploration Company have indicated plans to return this month to the site of a controversial drilling operation at 25 Mile Road and Dequindre in order to conduct well-completion and testing operations.

"Testing the well is required to determine whether the well will continue to exist or whether it will be plugged and the landscape restored," said Patrick Gibson, vice president of the West Bay Exploration Company. "We understand that testing the well needs to take place before summer so as to have the smallest impact on area residents. In order to meet this timeline, testing must begin soon."

The Traverse City-based company previously operated a test well in a residential neighborhood near 25

Mile and Dequindre roads for about two weeks, until concerns raised by Shelby Township residents and others at a series of town hall meetings prompted West Bay to indefinitely suspend drilling operations at the site.

"This letter (dated April 30) is the first formal information the Charter Township of Shelby has received from West Bay Exploration regarding its intentions to resume operations at the well site," Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis said.

In the letter, Gibson explains that West Bay officials participated in a March 1 workshop hosted by Rep. Peter Lucido and a group of local homeowners living near the site. At that time, West Bay presented a detailed description of what is entailed in a "test well," as well as a summary of continued completion and testing operations.

"We want to make sure

# Drilling

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we are being transparent in this process and that adjacent homeowners are informed and able to give us their input on how we can make the process as smooth as possible during this time," Gibson said. "West Bay will continue to provide information to residents adjacent to the well site, as well as the township board through the completion period."

According to William Horn, an attorney for the West Bay Exploration Company, West Bay has "had numerous meetings and discussions with the local fire department chief to explain what will be involved in the upcoming activities and discuss the materials and substances that will be used."

"West Bay's plan of operations was developed with the input from the fire chief and the neighbors in mind," Horn said.

While appreciative of the company's efforts, township officials say they're

disappointed with West Bay's apparent unwillingness to share the information at a public hearing in the township's board room.

"The Shelby Township Board of Trustees has long maintained that the proper way for West Bay Exploration Co. to communicate and coordinate with our residents is through a public hearing with our board of trustees at one of its regularly scheduled, televised meetings," Stathakis said.

"It's unfortunate that West Bay Exploration chose to move forward without acknowledging the township's repeated requests for such a hearing, but I feel secure that our ordinances are in place and ready to address this issue."

Following the advice of Huth, environmental attorney Jim Olson and Christopher Grobbel of Grobbel Environmental and Planning Associates, the Board of Trustees adopted amendments on April 7 that assure that activities that state law permits the township to regulate are located in appropriate zoning districts and



FILE PHOTO

At a town hall in August, West Bay Exploration Co. Vice President Patrick Gibson answered questions about the company's controversial drilling operation at 24 Mile and Dequindre roads. The company recently confirmed that it plans to return to the site this month in order to conduct well-completion and testing operations.

operated based on an accepted standard to alleviate the potential for nuisances to any adjoining residential neighborhoods.

"The township has the power and a constitutional mandate to protect public health, safety and welfare of the residents and the environment regarding haul routes, potential for environmental impact and the need for emergency procedures and remediation contingency plans, pre-

vention of nuisance noise, light odors, dust/traffic, vibration and pollution, disclosure of hazardous materials on-site and hauled on public right-of-ways, etc.," Huth said.

In a letter to the township attorney, Horn said that West Bay intends to comply with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) statutes and regulations regarding the drilling operation.