

SHELBY TOWNSHIP PRESS RELEASE

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Shelby Township looks to amend zoning ordinances, extend oil moratorium

The Shelby Township Board of Trustees voted 6-1 at the Jan. 20 Board meeting to recommend a proposed amendment to the Township's zoning ordinances with a specific eye toward land use and development for oil and gas exploration and related extraction activities.

"The Board is recommending that the Planning Commission address the zoning ordinance with a public hearing, followed by a recommendation back to the Board for the sake of accelerating the process," Shelby Township Supervisor Rick Stathakis said.

"This way, anything that is amended in regards to land use and ordinances may be in place when future individual requests for rezoning are made, so that they may be based upon the new revised amendments that offer more protection than old policies."

The recommendation is the first step in a process outlined by state law, which requires the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing before a zoning ordinance may become effective. This process avoids a later legal challenge to this or any future ordinance.

Specifically, the zoning changes discussed Jan. 20, if approved, will affect the way ordinances regulate hydrocarbon transportation, storage and transmission.

Treasurer Michael Flynn, while in full support of the recommendation, cast a nay vote. His hesitation was with the time table and process of the recommendation, not with the issue.

The Board also unanimously passed an extension of the Township's moratorium regarding all oil, gas and other hydrocarbon exploration and related extraction activities within the Township.

The new moratorium will extend the previous one adopted on Aug. 19, 2014, for a period of three months until May 19, 2015. No changes will be made to alter the moratorium.

Clerk Stanley Grot questioned why the moratorium would only be extended for three months instead of six.

"If a community keeps extending its moratoriums so that it can work on ordinances, that is seen as proper," Township Attorney Rob Huth said. "But if a community sets a blanket moratorium, just to shut down activity, and the moratorium is longer than needed, it has a risk of being tossed out."

"We are acting in good faith. We are only putting a moratorium in place for as long as we need to protect our residents," Huth added.

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