

## Crowd in control - Denton Record-Chronicle (TX) - June 1, 2015 - page NEWS\_A01

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STAFF WRITER | Page NEWS\_A01

Walter Lindrose came to a political rally outside **Denton** City Hall on Sunday afternoon looking for answers.

Holding a handmade sign and wearing a black-and-white **Frack Free Denton** T-shirt, Lindrose towered above most of the crowd of more than 150 people. They listened to music and to speeches about how House Bill 40 will limit local control of the oil and gas industry.

He was most concerned that the City Council could repeal the seven-month-old citizens' initiative that banned hydraulic fracturing inside city limits.

HB 40 effectively nullified **Denton's** ban. The new law also affects local oil and gas rules in more than 300 Texas cities. The City Council will consider whether to repeal the initiative during its regular meeting Tuesday night as part of a larger legal strategy to restore local control in Texas.

Lindrose asked Adam Briggie, president of the **Denton** Drilling Advisory Group, which helped pass the ban, whether people should speak against the city's reversal. Briggie said the group wasn't taking a position for now. Instead, he urged people to come to the council meeting and both speak and listen.

"Come share your ideas," Briggie said, cautioning people to be civil and respectful.

At least two **Denton** City Council members participated in the rally. Council member Kevin Roden drew his own handmade sign that read, "Keep Democracy Local." Newly elected council member Keely Briggs also held a sign, "I'm NOT giving up. Don't Roll Over."

Briggs said she, too, hoped people would come and speak to the council on Tuesday.

"I hope that they speak not to the ideas of what they've heard, but how they really feel [about the proposal to repeal]," Briggs said, adding, "I fought for this as a citizen. I just can't forget about it."

Ed Soph said **Denton** DAG organized the rally to get people out for Tuesday's council meeting. Briggie, who is an environmental philosophy professor at the University of North Texas, gave the crowd a short philosophy lesson on politics from Aristotle.

The crowd booed when Briggie announced that fracking officially returns to **Denton** today. Vantage Energy, which resumed operations last week, will complete new gas wells on the city's west side.

Tara Linn Hunter, also of **Denton** DAG, told the crowd that volunteers recently visited with each of the residents in a small mobile home community beside the well site. The volunteers provided the residents with information on how to log environmental and health complaints with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The neighborhood is just outside the city limits.

Residents told the volunteers that the community's well water got murky, smelly and slick after the last fracking operation. They saved a sample and showed it to the volunteers, Hunter said.

To help, **Denton** DAG contracted with a certified lab to test the community's well water before fracking begins, in case it changes again, Hunter said. She passed a hat for donations to help pay for the water testing. She told the crowd that **Denton** DAG also accepts donations through its website, [frackfreedenton.com](http://frackfreedenton.com).

Before rallygoers took their signs to the street and yelled a call-and-response chant, "Our vote, our voice," they formed a circle under the trees in Quakertown Park. Inside the circle, Hares on the Mountain guitarist George Neal and fellow guitarist Matthew Long played several folk songs, including the Woody Guthrie classic "This Land Is Your Land."

Neal confessed to the crowd that he was "a ranter."

"At times like this, it's easy to feel alone," Neal said. "But when I see something like this, I don't feel alone. I'm proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you."

For his part, Lindrose said the people have already spoken.

"A cornerstone of American democracy is voting - and the people voted," Lindrose said, as he waved at honking cars on McKinney Street. "And to set that aside so easily is wrong."

The **Denton** City Council meeting to consider whether to repeal the ban begins at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall, 215 E. McKinney St.

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