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# Inside Last Night's Marathon Meeting Over Denton's Potential Fracking Ban

By [DOUALY XAYKAOTHAO \(/PEOPLE/DOUALY-XAYKAOTHAO\)](/PEOPLE/DOUALY-XAYKAOTHAO) • JUL 16, 2014

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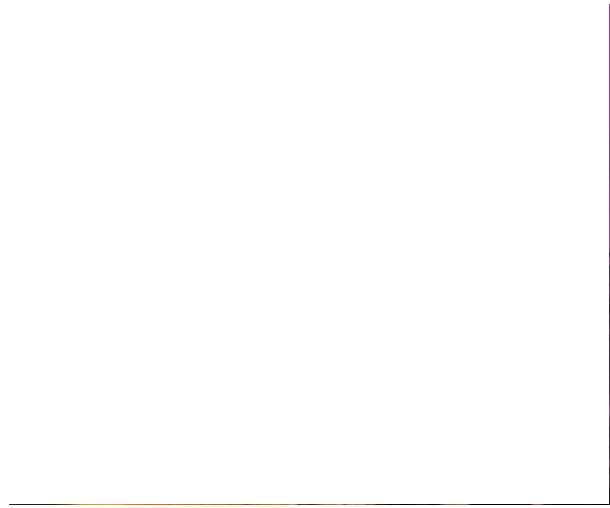
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*Former Texas Supreme Court Justice Tom Phillips speaks to the Denton City Council.*

JOYCE MARSHALL / FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM



A citizen-led petition to ban fracking inside Denton city limits heads to voters in November after city leaders voted down the anti-fracking ban early this morning.



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The marathon nine-hour meeting was surprisingly tame. More than 110 people signed up to speak, but another five who were walk-ins also had that chance. Another 160 wrote comments on cards. The vote took place just before 3 a.m. and the meeting started at 6:30 p.m.

Before the vote, Denton mayor Chris Watts acknowledged there's a lot of emotion and passion surrounding this issue and he was very frank about needing help in searching for the best strategy.

"I think the message I'm sending to the public in denying this ordinance is that I want the public to decide what the situation is with the ban," he says. "Is the public going to vote for it or is the public going to vote against it? The good thing is the council always has the option that if the public votes against it, we can still enact something that will still meet some of those interests."

Those interests he's talking about includes the rights of property owners, mineral owners, the industry folks, the oil and gas drillers, and also ordinary citizens.

"I am a mineral owner, and I'm in favor of the fracking ordinance," says Sarah Bagheri, who was one of the 115 people who gave a public testimony at the meeting.

Councilman Dalton Gregory said he was frustrated about what he calls a lot of misinformation about the pros and cons of hydraulic fracturing.

"I find it very interesting that the threat of a ban on fracking has generated more comments from the industry than we've ever had, saying they want to work with us," he says. "Yet, every time that we've asked them for specifics on solutions, they've offered nothing."

Representatives of the oil and gas industry folks from inside and outside the state were also at the meeting.

Former Texas Supreme Court Justice Tom Phillips, who represents the influential Texas Oil & Gas Association, also spoke.

"I believe the proposed ordinance to ban hydraulic fracturing is unconstitutional, because state regulation of oil and gas exploration and production has displaced a city's ability to ban all economically viable drilling within its borders," he says.

Voters will get to decide what happens to the anti-fracking ordinance in November.

(Photo Credit: Joyce Marshall/Fort Worth Star-Telegram) (<http://www.star-telegram.com/2014/07/15/5973163/denton-fracking-ban-hearing-draws.html?rh=1>)

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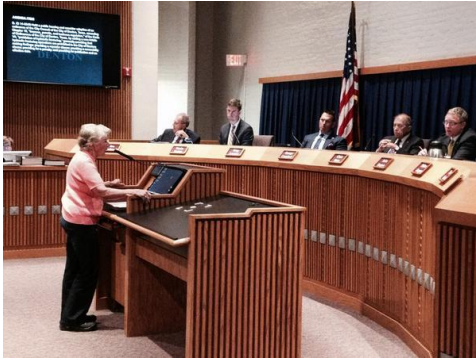
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