

RESOLUTION NO. 2012 - ____

A RESOLUTION TO EXPRESS TO THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY THE CONCERN OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH REGARDING NATURAL GAS EXTRACTION BY HYDRAULIC FRACTURING AND TO REQUEST NO LEGISLATION IN THIS FIELD UNTIL THE SAFETY OF THE PROCESS CAN BE ESTABLISHED BY THE APPROPRIATE STATE AGENCIES.

WHEREAS, it now appears that certain areas of North Carolina, including Wake County, may contain commercially viable reserves of natural gas; and

WHEREAS, hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” is the high-pressure injection of an often undisclosed mixture of water, sand, and toxic chemicals to break up shale or other rock formations that are otherwise impermeable to the flow of oil and/or gas;

WHEREAS, several million gallons of fresh water are typically used to drill and frack each shale gas well, and the simultaneous development of many such wells could compete with essential water usage and exacerbate local water shortages such as those that have stemmed from North Carolina’s recent severe droughts;

WHEREAS, the resulting wastewater may contain not only the undisclosed chemicals used in fracking fluid (including known carcinogens, neurotoxins, and endocrine disrupters) but also harmful levels of natural contaminants from deep underground, including corrosive salts, metals, volatile organic compounds, and radioactive elements that are known to pose serious public health threats and that are not adequately treated by conventional wastewater treatment facilities;

WHEREAS, the current and future water supply for Raleigh and the Triangle Region includes Jordan Lake and Falls Lake, and surface spills of drilling and fracking wastes at drilling sites, or during the transport of these wastes, into the watersheds of tributaries to these lakes would put at risk these vital water supplies;

WHEREAS, drilling and fracking for shale gas would bring a significant increase in heavy-duty truck traffic – nearly 4000 trips per new well -- and this would increase the risk of traffic accidents involving potentially toxic waste, accelerate damage to North Carolina’s public roads, and put extra demand on emergency services.

WHEREAS, North Carolina does not currently allow either horizontal drilling or injection of chemicals underground, and the current North Carolina draft report on in-state shale gas resources and of the potential impacts of reversing this ban and allowing drilling and fracking to extract these resources raises serious questions about the potential negative impacts to our citizens;

WHEREAS, the expanding popularity of natural gas as a less polluting form of fossil fuel will certainly lead to increased pressure from suppliers of natural gas to be allowed to explore for and extract this resource from our state; and

WHEREAS, Article 27 of the N. C. General Statutes governs oil and gas exploration and extraction but is not up to date on current technologies, including hydraulic fracturing, being used to find and supply natural gas among other types of fuels; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has been directed to study the subject of oil and gas exploration and specifically to focus on the use of directional drilling, horizontal drilling, and hydraulic fracturing; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of S 709 would direct DENR to formulate a comprehensive report that surveys the potential for commercial shale gas resources in the state and recommendations for a regulatory scheme to develop the natural gas resource; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly and DENR need to balance the possible economic benefits of shale gas extraction against any deleterious impacts of that activity including the need for large amounts of water, potential groundwater contamination by chemicals used in the process, the need to treat large amounts of possibly contaminated water, and the surface damage caused by the need to clear roads and work sites;

WHEREAS, depending upon how hydraulic fracturing is implemented, publicly owned treatment works for wastewater could be called upon to treat and dispose of millions of gallons of wastewater which may contain unknown pollutants and for which none of the local governments involved has made long term financing and operating plans and may not have adequate funding capability to implement;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH

THAT:

1. The General Assembly proceeds in a deliberate and thoughtful way to study how, if at all, to allow and, regulate the extraction of natural gas in North Carolina and, in particular, by the hydraulic fracturing method while fully protecting public health and the environment, and vital drinking water supplies.
2. The General Assembly preserve the rights of local governments to control and manage land uses within their jurisdictions relating to oil and gas extraction and that all of the environmental, economic, and social benefits and consequences of shale gas extraction be fully investigated and understood before the activity is allowed to proceed within the state, and that allowance be made for public input into any decisions or policies coming out of the forthcoming DENR report.

Adopted:

Submitted by Councilor Crowder and Councilor Stagner
