

THE COURIER

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MUD, ORN wade through well relocation contract

By Jake Muonio
HCN/Villager staff

Members of the Oak Ridge North City Council and Southern Montgomery County Municipal Utilities District will meet with residents of the Village of Oak Ridge Grove today to discuss how the MUD might lessen the impact of a new well facility near the subdivision.

Residents learned about the facility, which has been in the works since early this decade, earlier this year when a contractor hired by SMCMUD started clearing trees at the site.

The \$3.5 million project will include a 500,000-gallon storage tank, in addition to the actual water well, with a second 500,000-gallon tank possibly added in the future. Plans for the site had been changed from those approved by the City Council in 2005, moving the site's entrance from the south side of the property to a new location off Oak Ridge Grove Drive.

Those changes were made to save costs and approved by City Manager Paul Mendes, SMCMUD General Manager Rick Moffatt said.

SMCMUD's board approved moving the well site entrance from Oak Ridge Grove Drive back to Oakhurst Drive in May, but with several conditions. One condition is that the city pay half the cost of a bridge over a drainage channel on the property. Another condition would require neighborhood residents to sign an agreement not to file an injunction against the MUD over the project or pursue any other

legal action. Residents in the development have been looking into the possibility of filing an injunction to prevent construction at the site from starting; and with the project approaching its start date, that window of opportunity is closing.

The MUD board also awarded the project's construction con-

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tract to N&S Construction, with work at the well site expected to begin in 30-45 days.

At the suggestion of Mayor Fred O'Connor, a committee is being formed to lay out the specifics of what is being asked of each side before a decision is made.

"Before everyone signs on to it, let's identify what all the aspects are and let's agree or at least get them on the table," he said. "If we can get these things all on the table, the council has something to vote on, and the citizens understand what they're signing off on."

Councilman James Walton and newly elected member Peter Nett, a resident of the Village of Oak Ridge Grove, will be on the committee, along with four residents of the subdivision and SMCMUD.

The developer of the property, William Dalton, of VORG Ltd., and the company that constructed the homes, Darling Homes, also were invited to the discussion.

The requirement by SMCMUD for ORN to help pay for the cost of moving the entrance didn't sit well with some members of the council.

"I feel like, at times, it's almost a way of putting the monkey on our back," Walton said, "that if it doesn't get done, it's not (SMCMUD's) fault; it's Oak Ridge's fault."

Councilman Don Tucker also suggested the city's leasing of the property to the MUD at \$1 a year for 99 years was a more than an adequate contribution to the project, pointing out that the well site was one of three with optimal well-drilling sands within SMCMUD's boundaries.

Once the committee meets, ORN and the residents will need to decide whether to agree to the MUD's conditions. The City Council is expected to address the issue again at its meeting Monday.

Jake Muonio can be reached at jmuonio@hcnonline.com.