



## Woodlands villager – news

### Oak Ridge North discusses plans for water tower

**By Lauren Hodges**

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Some residents voiced opposition Monday to a proposed \$3.5 million water tower in Oak Ridge North's Oak Ridge Grove neighborhood.

Plans call for a 500,000 gallon water tank that would tap into the Jasper Aquifer. It would be owned and operated by the Southern Montgomery County Municipal Utility District on a parcel owned by the city.

The well would provide water for the area of Oak Hill North, in the district of Oak Grove, the new commerce park area and some of the county's eastern district. The tower would be 52 feet wide and 32 feet high, located 65 feet away from one pipeline and 100 feet from another. Inside the well will be two 150-pound cylinders of chlorine to treat the tank.

Some residents who showed up at the Oak Ridge North City Council meeting Monday night for a discussion on the issue voiced concerns about safety and property values. Complaints centered on the presence of pipelines and chlorine tanks. Another concern centered on why trees were cleared from the parcel before the project received final approval from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

"We do not discount the fact that we need water and we appreciate that," said Rebecca Dalby, resident of Oak Ridge Grove. "After sitting here for an hour and a half I still don't have any confidence that Oak Ridge North is protecting us."

There was conflicting information presented by residents and MUD officials in attendance as to whether or not the TCEQ had approved the plans.

In addressing the council, Rick Moffatt, general manager for SMCMUD, responding to a question posed by Councilman James Walton, said the project had already received state approval.

That assertion was challenged by several residents, including Oak Ridge North Police Chief Andy Walters, who said he was addressing the city council as a resident and not in an official capacity.

"I did some checking," Walters said. "TCEQ does not have a building plan. On Nov. 6, (SMCMUD) received a mailing from TCEQ denying (their permit request)."

How the water well might affect property values were another key concern of residents, who bought homes in the neighborhood developed by Darling Homes.

"I realize you guys spend a lot of time figuring out how we can get water," Patricia Icklos, resident said. "Our homes, starting at \$185,000, add something to Oak Ridge North."

The decision to put the well in that area was due in part to its ability to provide water to the needed areas, said Kerry Masson, president of the SMCMUD board of directors.

Masson, an Oak Ridge north resident who said he has been on the MUD board for 25 years, said the well is necessary and will be safe.

The safety precautions include alarms inside the building in case of a chlorine contamination, he said.

Moffatt said the fuel tanks for the generator will be located in a sound-proof enclosure, and a decision has yet to be made on whether they will use diesel to operate on natural gas.

"The section will be surveyed by geological engineers," Masson said. "It won't be done haphazardly."

Pending state approval, MUD officials said the project could get started in three or four months, and would take 15 months to complete.

Oak Ridge North Mayor Fred O'Connor said before the project comes to a vote before the city council, resident's questions would be answered and "due diligence" given to their concerns. The next meeting is planned for 7 p.m. on Feb. 23 in the city's Bob Williams Memorial Council Chambers at 27424 Robinson Road.

City swimming pool:

The South Montgomery County YMCA will oversee management of the municipal swimming pool in Oak Ridge North.

Operating with a one-year contract, the YMCA will take over selling pool passes, collecting and and all fees for daily cost, passes and programs.

Oak Ridge North City Manager Paul Mendes said the city will be able to save the city about \$7,300.

Last year, 61,000 was budgeted for the swimming pool.

"I think it could be very good for everyone involved," said Oak Ridge North Mayor Fred O'Connor said.

The Oak Ridge North municipal pool is located in Marilyn Edgar Park on Hillside Drive. Council election:

Three city council seats in Oak Ridge North are up for election May 9, including Steve Holcomb's Pos. 2 spot, Leah Gray's Pos. 4 and Tony Butler's Pos. 5. The city will work with Montgomery County again under an election services agreement.

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