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### MUD asks Oak Ridge North to split cost of well entrance relocation

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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 June 3 to discuss details as to how the MUD might lessen the impact of a well facility to be built near the subdivision.

Residents learned of the well facility, which had been in the works since the early 2000s, earlier this year when a contractor hired by SMCMUD began 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 some time 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 okayed by ORN City Manager Paul Mendes, SMCMUD General Manager Rick Moffatt said.

SMCMUD's board of directors, at its May meeting, approved moving the well site entrance from Oak Ridge Grove Drive back to Oakhurst Drive, but with several conditions. One condition is that the city of Oak Ridge North 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 contract to N&S Construction, with work at the well site expected to begin in 30-45 days.

At the suggestion of ORN 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.

"We have basically a lot of facts that are out there," O'Connor said. "Some are confusing facts. Some are not facts.

"If there's going to be this joint participation, what are all of the elements going to be that go into this participation? 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. ... 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."

The ORN council selected Councilman James Walton and newly elected member Peter Nett — a resident of the Village of Oak Ridge Grove — to join 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, were also 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 adequate contribution to the project, pointing out that the well site was one of three with optimal well-drilling sands within SMCMUD's boundaries.

Councilmember Leah Gray wasted few words in her assessment of the situation.

"We've sold out a bunch of expensive homes for \$99," she said.

Kerry Masson, SMCMUD president, said he wasn't able to quantify the value of the site because the owners of one of the other optimal sites refused to sell the property, and the other property owner never responded to the MUD when it expressed interest in the property.

SMCMUD, which Masson said has a "government mandate to design and build the well," has promised to make efforts to minimize the visual impact of the well facility.

Moffatt said the decision has not yet been made on what type of a storage tank to build, and the MUD's color options will depend on the material the tank is built from. If SMCMUD opts for a lower maintenance design of the tank, it will be required to select one of six predetermined colors.

Masson said the least noticeable color option will be selected, regardless of which option the MUD board chooses. In addition, a fence will be constructed around the well itself, and vegetation will be planted to screen the homes on Oak Ridge Grove Drive. If relocation of the entrance to Oakhurst Drive occurs, trees will be planted across that entrance as well.

Masson also promised residents of the subdivision that his desire to work with them to camouflage the site won't end once the window to file an injunction closes.

Once the committee meets, ORN and the residents will need to decide whether or not to agree to the MUD's conditions. ORN City Council is expected to address the issue again at its regular June 8 meeting.

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