

## **Move the Gas Plant Group Responds to Judge's Comments**

In the Sept. 25 issue of The Lexington Leader, Lee County Judge Frank Malinak stated that the commissioners court “will not approve a resolution for or against the proposed natural gas plant slated to be built outside of Lexington right now.”

Instead, Malinak said the court would investigate concerns about the plant's potential negative impacts, including air pollution harmful to human health.

On behalf of the Move the Gas Plant steering committee, we say, “Let the investigation begin.”

But let us be clear. We do not believe this is really about the need for an investigation.

What is clear to us is that Malinak apparently has already made up his mind.

He stated in The Leader, “I will never trade money for pollution.”

But it sure appears our county judge is OK with sacrificing the quality of life in the Blue area, and the property values of landowners there, for new tax revenues for the county.

Malinak also stated that “...if our investigation confirms that the proposed natural gas plant is clean and without most of the accused pollution affects but will be a benefit to our residents and our county with increased property tax revenue that could help lead to lowering of the property tax for our individual property owners, we will consider that a win for everyone.”

“A win for everyone?”

Not for those of us in the Blue area.

The 1,200-megawatt gas plant proposed by Sandow Lakes Energy would be among the largest such plants in Texas.

You don't need an investigation to know that locating a huge industrial facility in Blue will dramatically alter the rural nature of one of the county's fastest growing communities.

You don't need an investigation to know the property values of landowners in Blue will suffer if the plant is built there.

That is especially true for those who live closest to the proposed site of the plant, at the intersection of CR 309 and 312.

A map from the company's application for a state air permit shows almost 100 homes located within one-and-a-half miles of the proposed plant. The historic Adina Christian Church and the River View Christian Academy, a home/school for teen girls, are within that radius.

And there will be air pollution from this gas plant, no matter how clean the company claims it will be, and even if the plant's air emissions are within acceptable levels set by state and federal governments.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) compiled a list showing the pollutants the plant will emit, along with the tons per year the company claims will be emitted. That list included:

Nitrogen Oxides – 249.1323 tons per year

Particulate Matter – 151.3952 tons per year

Volatile Organic Compounds – 87.968 tons per year

According to a study by the American Lung Association, nitrogen oxides emissions from natural gas power plants can exacerbate asthma and other respiratory conditions, especially in children and the elderly.

The association's study also found that volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides released by gas plants contribute to the formation of

ground-level ozone and smog, which can irritate the respiratory system and worsen lung conditions.

And particulate matter emitted from gas plants are associated with cardiovascular diseases, lung cancer and premature deaths, according to the National Library of Medicine and the TCEQ.

The TCEQ list also shows the plant will emit four million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year.

One of the Move the Gas Plant steering committee members, Trish Siler, is a disabled U.S. Army veteran. She served in the Gulf War and suffered serious health effects after being exposed to toxic air from burning oil fields and burn pits.

Trish lives within one-half mile of the proposed gas plant.

“I didn’t buy my land and move to Lee County so I could breathe more toxic air,” she said. “This plant would damage my property values. More importantly, it might further damage my health.”

The resolution submitted by Move the Gas Plant to Judge Malinak does not ask the commissioners court to take any action to stop the gas plant. The county has no power to do that.

Instead, our resolution essentially makes a simple request of the county.

It should show public support for our position that this gas plant does NOT belong in Blue.

And it should support our contention that there is a more suitable, feasible and less damaging location for this plant. That is the site of the old Alcoa aluminum smelter and coal plant on what is now Sandow Lakes Ranch.

Judge Malinak reported to us that he recently toured a large natural gas power plant near Temple.

Now that he’s seen one of the large power plants up close, our question to him is, “Would you want one of these built near your home?”

Note: An update on the gas plant will be the focus of the next Blue Neighborhood Watch meeting, set for 6 p.m., Oct. 17, at the Blue Volunteer Fire Department.

*Travis Brown, Michele Gangnes, Don Goerner and Sheril Smith all live in Blue and are members of the Move the Gas Plant steering committee.*

See <https://www.movethegasplant.org>