

BIPARTISAN EFFORT

Delegates want Marcellus Shale drill moratorium

Special legislative session sought to slow development, add rules

By Paul J. Nyden
Staff writer

Delegates Barbara Fleishauer, D-Monongalia, and Mike Manypenny, D-Taylor, hosted a bipartisan meeting at the Capitol on Friday to discuss their hopes to implement a temporary moratorium on drilling for natural gas in the state's huge Marcellus Shale reserves.

"A moratorium is essential," Fleishauer said. "We desperately need more inspectors. The DEP [Division of Environmental Protection] cannot do its job right now with only 15 inspectors to inspect 59,000 wells.

"We have heard about major problems and risks to drinking water," Fleishauer said. "We are committed to passing a bill."

Manypenny said, "No one wants to put a stranglehold on the oil and gas industry."

However, he said he became concerned after traveling around Wetzel and Tay-



Fleishauer



Snuffer

lor counties and seeing new wells being drilled in floodplains and streambeds.

"I have talked to drillers," Manypenny said. "Some say they have not seen an inspector for three years."

Many legislators want a special session to pass stricter Marcellus Shale regulations and a temporary moratorium.

Delegate Rick Snuffer, R-Raleigh, said, "This is truly a bipartisan effort. We need to hold a special session. I do not have a horse in this race, but I have a lot of constituents who have concerns."

Lewisburg Mayor John Manchester praised his City

DRILLING

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Council for prohibiting Marcellus Shale drilling within city limits.

"We want to protect our water supply. One of our chief assets and amenities is the Greenbrier River. We must protect the purity of its headwaters," Manchester said. "We need to have

regulations in place."

Delegate Pete Sigler, R-Nicholas, said, "Last July, Chesapeake Energy started a [drilling] pad on my property. We had no input into its location and no input into how they built roads across our property. One of our hayfields is cut off by their road.

"If you think we will all benefit," he said, "look at what you are going to lose in the process."

Delegate Nancy Guthrie, D-Kanawha, said drilling for nat-

ural gas is "an important industry that can bring a lot of employment.

"But we are also concerned about people's mineral rights and property rights, the upkeep of roads and keeping our air and water pure."

Guthrie also wants a special legislative session to discuss passing a temporary moratorium.

Delegate Danny Wells, D-Kanawha, said he is disappointed the Legislature failed to pass any

Marcellus Shale legislation in the regular session.

"New York has a moratorium [on Marcellus drilling]," Wells said. "That is what we need."

Other delegates attending the meeting who supported a moratorium included Larry Barker, D-Boone, and Ray Canterbury, R-Greenbrier.

Larry Matheney, secretary-treasurer of the West Virginia AFL-CIO, said, "We want to see the shale developed. We want to

see jobs created. But we want it responsibly developed.

"It is time to respect our residential landowners, their water, public health and the quality of life. We need decent regulation of that industry."

Fleishauer also wants legislators to increase the cost of applying for a drilling permits. Today, the DEP can charge \$600 for each permit.

Julie Archer of the West Virginia Surface Owners Rights As-

sociation said, "We don't think we can go another year without further regulating this industry. . . . We do not believe [the] DEP should issue any permits that they cannot inspect and enforce."

Fleishauer said she hopes to have a special session after the May 14 primary election for governor.

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