

Fort Worth trustees OK drilling at 5 school sites

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FORT WORTH -- School trustees approved a gas-drilling contract Tuesday night with Dallas-based Dale Resources, which agreed to pay \$1.2 million to lease district land in southeast Fort Worth, including a parcel near Clark Field.

The contract includes 27.5 percent royalties for the district if gas is found.

Board members voted 9-0 to let Dale Resources lease five sites.

"It's a windfall," board member Judy Needham said. "It's a million-plus dollars that we didn't have in the budget."

Officials said the drilling will begin soon, and they expect it to be completed during the summer, when children are not in class.

The sites are:

116.33 acres in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Interstate 20 and Wichita Street near Clark Field and adjacent to Tarrant County College South Campus. This site is the only one that will have a well on it.

24.126 acres near O.D. Wyatt High School in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of East Seminary and Campus drives.

6.68 vacant acres east of O.D. Wyatt High School. The site is bordered on the north by East Seminary Drive, on the west and south by Coffey Avenue and by railroad tracks on the east.

Two tracts near L. Clifford Davis Elementary School, 4400 Campus Drive. Ten acres are in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of East Seminary and Campus drives, and a 2-acre tract is immediately west of and adjoining Davis Elementary.

Gas will be drawn from under the last four sites by horizontal drilling from rigs on privately owned land, Barbara Griffith, a district spokeswoman, said.

Superintendent Melody Johnson said the board did extensive homework before approving the deal.

"They looked into safety issues," Johnson said. "They looked at maps and contiguous properties. They paid attention to distance rules."

The city of Fort Worth requires companies that want to drill within 600 feet of a school building to get a special permit and to go through a public hearing process.

Access to the proposed drilling site will be from an I-20 service road. The site will be fenced with limited access and will be staffed 24 hours a day during drilling, fracing and

completion, the company told trustees.

As more gas wells are drilled in the urban areas atop the Barnett Shale, safety has become a greater concern.

In April, a valve on a well being drilled in Forest Hill by XTO Energy blew out, killing a worker.

Dale Resources told the school board that it has a clean safety record.

"Our top priorities are (A) safety and (B) sound abatement," said David Buchanan, community liaison for the company.

The company works closely with first responders, including firefighters, to educate them about the equipment and whom to notify in an emergency, he said.