

October 19, 2020

**BOARD OF EXAMINERS, APPEALS AND CONDEMNATION**

City of Long Beach  
California

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommend that the City Council adopt the ordinances amending Title 18 of the Long Beach Municipal Code relating to construction in the vicinity of oil/gas wells (LBMC 18.78) and methane gas mitigation (LBMC 18.79) and forward to the City Council for their consideration.

**DISCUSSION**

The City of Long Beach has developed around oil/gas wells that have been drilled during the past 100 years. Currently, there are approximately 2,400 active wells and 2,400 idle or abandoned wells in Long Beach. Since the City, for the most part, is already “built out” and the price of land has appreciated, developers are proposing projects in close proximity or over existing oil/gas wells.

The State of California, through California Geologic Energy Management Division (CALGEM), oversees the abandonment of wells in proximity to development projects. The City regulates land use and permits for developments. The Long Beach Municipal Code requires that all well abandonment comply with current CALGEM requirements. Essentially this requires that wells have multiple plugs and be setback from all structures. Requests by the development community for the City to consider an alternative policy to CALGEM standards (AKA, Equivalency Standards) have been received because of the costs associated with meeting CALGEM requirements. Development in the vicinity of oil/gas wells, landfills, and locations that were used for petroleum production or processing also prompted the need for the City to develop a policy for soil methane gas mitigation.

The City of Long Beach Development Services Department engaged the services of a consultant (Geosyntec Consultants) to conduct a survey of best practices by several Southern California agencies and to develop the City of Long Beach well abandonment “equivalency standards” and the methane mitigation standards. Subsequently, the two proposed Chapters (LBMC Chapter 18.78 – Exhibit A) and (LBMC Chapter 18.79 – Exhibit B) were developed.

In accordance with the Long Beach Municipal Code 18.10.020, the Board of Examiners, Appeals and Condemnation (BEAC) reviewed the proposed ordinance under LBMC on August 17, 2020, and October 19, 2020, for recommendation to City Council. Additionally, an online community meeting was held on the proposed Chapters on August 27, 2020. Members of the



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public, including local architects, developers, and other interested parties, attended the community meeting and provided input. The input received at the BEAC Board hearing and the community meeting were evaluated and the technical parts of the two ordinances were moved to the corresponding Building and Safety Bureau Bulletins (Bulletin #54 – Exhibit C and Bulletin #55 – Exhibit D). The proposed ordinances presented for Board review references the Bulletins with the LBMC. Utilization of the provisions in the Bulletins will assist developers, the design community, and City staff with design, review, and construction of well venting and methane gas mitigation.

Staff has reached out to the local Long Beach/South Bay Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the local office of the California Apartment Association, the Structural Engineers Association of Southern California, the Los Angeles/Ventura Chapter of the Building Industry Association, and the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (herein collectively referred to as “Industry Partners”) for input or feedback regarding the proposed new Chapters. Input was received from the public, Industry Partners, and members of the BEAC.

If BEAC supports the new regulations as recommended by the Building Official, a draft Ordinance will be prepared and referred to the City Council for consideration.

### SUSTAINABILITY

The proposed Chapters (LBMC Chapters 18.78 and 18.79) work together in addressing life safety matters with construction in the vicinity of oil wells and mitigating methane gas that will result in a healthier, cleaner and more viable environment for the City.

### SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVID KHORRAM, P.E., C.B.O.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF BUILDING AND SAFETY

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ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A – Draft LBMC 18.78  
Exhibit B – Draft LBMC 18.79  
Exhibit C – Draft Bulletin 54  
Exhibit D – Draft Bulletin 55  
Exhibit E – Proposed Construction Near Wells Standard Details  
Exhibit F – Proposed Methane Mitigation Standard Details