

9. PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:

9.1 Prohibiting the Leasing of City of Ithaca-Owned Land for Hydraulic-fracturing

Natural Gas Drilling and Extraction - Resolution

WHEREAS, it is increasingly clear that drilling for natural gas using high-volume slick-water hydraulic-fracturing (hydrofracking) may have severe adverse impacts on communities and the environment.

WHEREAS, the City of Ithaca owns property and land within the City of Ithaca for various uses and purposes including: areas of preservation including the Six Mile Creek and Ithaca Falls Natural Areas, parkland for public recreation and amusement such as Cass Park and Stewart Park, as well as land for other City facilities.

WHEREAS, the City of Ithaca also owns property and land outside the City of Ithaca for various uses and purposes, including a portion of “substitute” parkland in the southwest area of the City, which extends into the Town of Ithaca.

WHEREAS, the State of New York gives local governments the authority to enact local laws, ordinances, and policies not inconsistent with the provisions of the State constitution or any general law.

WHEREAS, the City of Ithaca is vested with the authority and power to regulate, manage, and control its property under General City Law.

WHEREAS, the Common Council of the City of Ithaca has authority to approve or deny any lease(s) of City owned land.

WHEREAS, the Board of Public Works has the authority to grant approval or deny any temporary easement(s), not exceeding a year, of City owned land under the City Municipal Code Chapter 170, entitled “Use of City Real Property”.

WHEREAS, the City of Ithaca has historically demonstrated and continues to support its commitment to preserving the beauty, quality, use, and ecologic and environmental integrity of all land within the City of Ithaca, but especially land owned by the City of Ithaca, through establishment and passage of Code provisions supporting City programs such as the Conservation Advisory Council, Parks Commission, Natural Areas Commission, City Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Council, Shade Tree Advisory Committee, and the City’s urban forestry program.

WHEREAS, the Six Mile Creek watershed is the primary watershed for the City of Ithaca.

WHEREAS, a portion of Six Mile Creek watershed is owned by the City as a Natural Area.

WHEREAS, the activity of drilling on and transporting natural gas from City-owned land, with the attendant well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities, may damage their—value by alienating the public from use and enjoyment of such land, threatening water resources, impairing habitat value for forest-dwelling species, removing natural vegetation cover, and allowing invasive species to become established.

WHEREAS, such activity would undoubtedly place added stress on species that may increasingly come under stress from the impacts of natural gas drilling.

WHEREAS any economic boost to the City from leasing City-owned land for development and sale of natural gas is short term, and will foreclose the long-term benefit to the City of tourism and enjoyment of City-owned land by residents of Ithaca and its surrounding areas.

WHEREAS, it is clear that from a long-term environmental, economic, and social perspective the value and integrity of City-owned land will be much greater if left unimpaired by the impacts of gas drilling than if such drilling is allowed to occur.

Now therefore be it RESOLVED, That the City of Ithaca will not lease or in any way consent to the use of any City-owned land, whether located within or outside the City of Ithaca, for high-volume, slick-water hydraulic-fracturing to extract natural gas.

Be it further RESOLVED, That the Mayor is hereby requested to investigate, on behalf of the City, legally binding means by which the protection of City-owned land, as intended by this resolution, could be ensured on a permanent basis (such as through the conveyance of conservation easements, for parkland and natural areas).