

A RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO HYDRAULIC FRACTURING OTHERWISE KNOWN AS “FRACKING”, ABSENT GUARANTEED PROTECTIONS TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH OF NORTH CAROLINA CITIZENS (2012-03-26/R-6)

WHEREAS, hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking” is a method of extracting natural gas that involves the injecting, at an extremely high pressure, a mixture of water, sand, and a cocktail of toxic chemicals to break up shale or other rock formations otherwise impermeable to the flow of natural gas; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina does not currently allow either horizontal drilling or hydraulic fracturing, and the current North Carolina study of in-state shale gas resources and of the potential impacts of reversing this ban and allowing drilling and fracking to extract these resources is being undertaken with insufficient time and without adequate funding; and

WHEREAS, substantial political influence and pressure to overturn these laws is being placed on policymakers by natural gas distributors, service companies, and utilities; and

WHEREAS, the Deep River Basin, which includes areas under Jordan Lake, in explored areas has been identified as containing underground deposits of natural gas; and

WHEREAS, Jordan Lake water is becoming more significant for planning in the Triangle Jurisdiction, and serves as an “insurance policy” for conditions of extreme drought for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area; and

WHEREAS, millions of gallons of freshwater are used to drill and to hydraulically fracture each shale gas well, and such development would exacerbate water shortages that have stemmed from North Carolina’s recent severe drought; and

WHEREAS, the wastewater produced from hydraulic fracturing includes carcinogenic, corrosive, and/or toxic salts, metals, petrochemicals and radioactive elements; and

WHEREAS, there are currently no viable options for the disposal of toxic hydraulic fracturing wastewater, and North Carolina’s wastewater treatment plants are not equipped to handle the extreme and highly-variable contaminant loads of hydraulic fracturing wastewater; and

WHEREAS, negative environmental and public health impacts related to hydraulic fracturing have been documented in other states, including the contamination of drinking water wells, the contamination of surface waters, and the degradation of air-quality; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Chapel Hill is committed to mitigating climate change to the degree necessary to sustain a livable future; yet energy generated from shale gas may be as bad or worse in causing climate change as a result of the release of methane from the production and distribution of natural gas related to hydraulic fracturing; and

WHEREAS, Section 5 of the North Carolina Constitution states that “It shall be the policy of the State to conserve and protect its lands and waters for the benefit of all its citizenry, and to this end it shall be a proper function of the State of North Carolina and its political subdivisions...to control and limit the pollution of our air and water...and in every other appropriate way to preserve as part of our common heritage of this State its forests, wetlands, estuaries, beaches, historical sites, open lands, and places of beauty”.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council urges the North Carolina General Assembly to maintain current laws in North Carolina that prevent hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling in the State and to take no action that would weaken these laws before it is fully demonstrated that North Carolina public health, waters, land, air, economy, and quality of life will be guaranteed protection from the impacts of allowing shale gas development in the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution are sent to our legislative delegation and to the leadership of the North Carolina General Assembly.

This the 26th day of March, 2012.