

# Larimer County commissioners unanimously approve oil and gas regulation changes in late night vote

## Commissioners require 2,000-foot setbacks

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The Larimer County Commissioners voted unanimously late Thursday night to approve more restrictive changes to the county's land use code regarding oil and gas regulations.

The commissioners voted Thursday after continuing their public hearing [from Monday night](#) following several hours of public comment. Thursday's meeting [kicked off with around an hour and a half of more public comment](#), allowing those unable to speak Monday their chance to offer input on the proposed changes.

Discussion around changes to the county's land use code regarding oil and gas has carried on for several months and several rounds of public input. The proposed regulations include restrictions of where oil and gas operations can occur, different types of safety monitoring and more.

More information on the oil and gas regulation changes, including a full packet of information on what changes include, can be found at [larimer.org](http://larimer.org).

Following the opening public comment, the commissioners spent nearly three hours asking questions and discussing desired changes to wording. Commissioners Kristin Stephens and Jody Shadduck-McNally each sought several changes in the wording of the proposed regulations.

One such change, proposed by Stephens, was increasing the distance oil and gas work must be from many buildings to 2,000 feet. While buildings like schools or family/child care homes were already set to be 2,000 feet from oil and gas work, Stephens wanted to add buildings like multi-family homes to that list to protect people; this proposed addition would make that list include any school facility, hospital, medical clinic, senior living or assisted living facility, multi-family dwelling, dwelling unit or state-licensed daycare.

"I see there are serious health concerns about having homes within 1,000 feet," she said. "I think 2,000 feet will eliminate questions about cancers, birth defects, (etc.)."

Shadduck-McNally also wanted to remove natural resources and forestry land from the proposed allowed locations where oil and gas work could be done.

"I don't feel like I would like to see oil and gas operations in forestry, especially with our recent fires and debris flow," she said.

Following several other change requests, the commissioners moved on to final comments and their unanimous vote.

All of the commissioners thanked the community for coming out to give input as well as county staff for working hard to get the regulations in order. They also acknowledged that they will have the ability to alter and change aspects of the regulations if they feel they need to later on.

Stephens said that while some people believed the decisions made were for political reasons, she said the process was done the way it was to try to make the best decision for the county.

“We tried to have a fair process,” she said “There were folks who felt like they weren’t heard because we maybe didn’t agree with them, but I do assure folks that we had a lot to weigh here in making these decisions. We didn’t just try to take one perspective in mind, we tried to take all perspectives in mind.”

She added that [Colorado Senate Bill 181](#), which puts some of the power of oil and gas regulations into the hands of local government to prioritize the protection of public safety, health, welfare and the environment, means that the commissioners get to decide what works best for the community they serve.

“For me, that is what I kept front of mind as we dug into these rules,” she added.

Shaddock-McNally said she feels the commissioners have advanced protections for the community and its wildlife.

She added that her “north star” through the decision process was the introduction section of SB-181 and the prioritization of protecting the community.

“The question was not where the oil and gas facility is located ... but whether any location proposed should be approved in the first place,” she said. “I feel SB-181 gave us those tools to really use that north star to really take seriously this responsibility of not just current residents but future residents.”

Kefalas said one of the difficulties he has grappled with through the decision-making process was that so many people spoke up about their concerns over losing jobs in the county.

“I cant just write it off that ‘well, they will find a job installing solar panels,’” he said. “It is not just that simple, none of this stuff is just that simple.”

However, he said that the message the commissioners have received resoundingly from the community is that regulations need to go above and beyond what the state has required.

He added that while it is important to acknowledge all the sectors in the community, he is supportive of where they are and the decision they made.

“Through this process we have tried to be inclusive,” Kefalas said. “I think we have accomplished this and we will see what the future holds.”

The vote for the new regulations passed 3-0 and will go into effect Sept. 15.