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Snake River Oil and Gas eyes new well in Fruitland

Council takes notice

Corey Evan Special to the Independent-Enterprise

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FRUITLAND — How will Snake River Oil and Gas' plans for a new well in Fruitland pan out? That's the question on the minds of the Fruitland City Council, as discussed during its regular meeting on May 12.

City Administrator Stuart Grimes reached out to James Thum, oil and gas program manager for the Idaho Department of Lands, after receiving notice about Snake River Oil and Gas' application to establish a new spacing unit in sections 15 and 22 of Fruitland. In his inquiry, Grimes sought to know the specific location for the well itself in order to allow the council to provide comments to the Department of Lands regarding the proposal.

As included in the meeting's agenda, a May 7 response by Thum suggests that the company is redrawing its plans as of press time.

"Please be advised that as of May 6 ... Snake River has formally withdrawn this application," wrote Thum. "The department anticipates that they will likely re-submit a revised request for spacing by the May 23, 2025 deadline."

However, Thum indicated that geologic information included in the initial application shows a tentative surface location near the center of the southeast quarter of Section 15 (labeled as "15-1" on maps), or the northern half and northeast quarter of Section 22 (labeled "22-1"). A map of the proposed sites was not included with Thum's response in the meeting agenda.

Grimes told the council in his comments on the matter that the specific location is not required to be disclosed until a drilling application has been submitted. City officials expressed concerns about the well's proximity to residents.

"I suspect [the withdrawal is] because some of the information on it was incorrect," said Grimes. "I think they've identified a potential pool just outside the boundaries of the existing one."

Grimes noted that while Payette County regulations require setbacks from occupied structures be 300 feet, compared to Fruitland's rules which require 1200 feet.

City attorney Stephanie Bonney added that because the area Snake River is focusing on does not affect other spacing units, city officials can't take much action at this time beyond its existing restriction.

"It's really not right yet [to take any action until they get a spacing unit approved, and then they go to a permit to drill]," said Bonney. "That's really where you want to get involved."

The council took no action on the matter, as it awaits further action by Snake River officials. Mayor Kari Peterson said the council will keep an eye on developments to determine which actions to take.

