

Planning Commission Recommends Approval of Consumer's Energy Gas Valve Facility Approval on Sheldon Road – OTFD Ready in Case of any Emergencies

Planning Commission voted 7/0 to recommend that the Board of Trustees approve Consumer's Energy Project on Sheldon Road, a gas regulation facility called "Consumers Energy Rochester City Gate". On January 18, 2021, Consumers Energy had previously obtained a variance allowing the valves to only 30 feet from Sheldon Road instead of the required 50 feet, citing better safety if closer to the road. Some members of our Planning commission seemed unaware that this variance had been granted.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF OAKLAND

4393 Collins Rd., Rochester, MI. 48306
Telephone: (248) 651-4440 Fax: (248) 651-1510
www.oaklandtownship.org
tberger@oaklandtownship.org

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION FOR VARIANCE REQUEST

Date: 12/17/21

Name of Applicant Consumers Energy (Joseph Lawson)

Current Address One Energy Plaza, Jackson, MI 49201

Telephone (Home) (517) 788-8912 (Work/Other) (517) 435-5078

Address of Variance Request Sheldon Road - North of Mead Road

Parcel Number 10-35-376-026 & 10-35-376-027

General Location/Crossroads West side of Sheldon Road approximately 550 feet north of Mead Road

Explain your variance request:

Request to reduce the required 50' front yard setback to 30' to allow the reconstruction of the natural gas city gate (regulation) facility. This reduction will allow the placement of underground gas piping and above grade control valves closer to the right of way. The site is currently used for the same purpose and contains valves located in similar locations. The location will improve safety of the site by having the valves close to the road for easier emergency access. These valves are used to shut down the flow of gas to the facility. A detailed site layout showing the location of the proposed valves accompanies the application.

Of most concern to me is the proposed 1000 gallon above ground storage tank of methyl mercaptan. This is the chemical compound used to add odor to natural gas. Adding odorizers has been done since a 1937 Texas school gas explosion and fire killing 295 and injuring 300. See this Wikipedia article about this. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_London_School_explosion




Before 1937 a gas leak could not be detected by odor. Texas also increased the requirements to be called an "engineer" as faulty engineering caused the gas leak.

So adding odorizers makes the gas safer because we can detect a leak by odor. However we have to handle the inherent risk of the odorizer storage and use. It seems that gas companies have done this

successfully based on an absence of internet articles about issues with odorizer / mercaptan storage. My search mainly turned up a Louisiana incident of explosion and fire at a chemical plant using methyl mercaptan as a starting point chemical to make insecticide that killed four in 2014. [DuPont La Porte Facility Toxic Chemical Release | CSB](#). The 161 page report of the Chemical Safety Board cites many failures to anticipate problems that could arise and prepare to deal with them.

At the Planning Commission meeting Jim Tweedie, Planning Commissioner, and also OTFD Firefighter/ Paramedic asked if methyl mercaptan would be stored there. He has responded to odor complaints from a similar site on Dutton Road near Musson Elementary, which has been upgraded recently. Consumer Energy's response was the first time I heard of the 1000 gallon above ground methyl mercaptan tank. I suppose it is the large building. It appears from comments below from Chief Paul Strelchuk of Oakland Township Fire Department that there is already some methyl mercaptan storage there now.

I thought it prudent to absolutely sure that Chief Strelchuk was aware of this methyl mercaptan storage and prepared to deal with emergencies. He was and is. See our email exchange

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Wed 2/2/2022 12:19 PM

Robert Yager <yager@comcast.net>

Methyl Mercaptan at New Gas Facility on Sheldon Road

To Paul Strelchuk (pstrelchuk@oaklandtownship.org)

Cc Kline, Adam; Jamie Moore (jmoore@oaklandtownship.org); Lou Danek (ldanek@oaklandtownship.org); Andy Zale (azale@oaklandtownship.org); dmabry@oaklandtownship.org; Dominic Abbate (dabbate@oaklandtownship.org); jelder@oaklandtownship.org; John Giannangeli (jgiannangeli@oaklandtownship.org); 'Imangiapane@oaklandtownship.org'; Robin Buxar (rbuxar@oaklandtownship.org)

 You forwarded this message on 2/2/2022 12:20 PM.

Paul Strelchuk,
Fire Chief
Oakland Township

Re: Methyl Mercaptan 1,000 gallons storage on Sheldon, between Snell and Mead at gas valve facility

Please consider what incidents OTFD might be need to prepare to respond to as a result of the soon to be 1,000 gallon above ground storage tank of methyl mercaptan at the gas valve site. I am a retired (2006) Dupont industrial chemist, but my knowledge of methyl mercaptan is limited, as I have not had direct experience with it.




I read that water may not put out a fire.

I am also concerned to find that Dupont, Laporte Louisiana Plant had four deaths in 2014 due to a methyl mercaptan release in their insecticide plant there.

A 161 page Chemical Safety Board report citing Dupont's deficiencies can be seen here: <https://www.csb.gov/dupont-la-porte-facility-toxic-chemical-release/>

Robert Yager



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Wed 2/2/2022 7:19 PM

Paul Strelchuk <pstrelchuk@oaklandtownship.org>

Re: Methyl Mercaptan at New Gas Facility on Sheldon Road

To Robert Yager

Cc Adam Kline; Jamie Moore; Lou Danek; Andy Zale; Dave Mabry; Dominic Abbate; Jack Elder; John Giannangeli; Lana Mangiapane; Robin Buxar

Hi Bob,

Most of the members on OTFD are certified at Operations level in Haz-Mat and a couple are trained at Haz-Mat Technician level.




If we have an incident with any Hazardous Materials we do a size up from a distance. If we determine that it's something that we can't handle the Incident Commander with contact dispatch and have the Oakland County Haz-Mat Duty Officer contact them and will explain what we have. The Haz-Mat duty Officer then decides what if any thing needs to be done.

If the situation is serious, the County wide Haz-Mat team will be activated, they have 3 specialized trucks that carry all the different equipment that might be needed.

This team has been activated a couple times here in Oakland Twp. Obviously there is a lot more to all this Haz-Mat stuff. If you would like to learn more about this, I would be happy to sit down with you and go more in depth on this topic.

Thanks for asking,

Paul Strelchuk UM

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Wed 2/2/2022 7:38 PM

Paul Strelchuk <pstrelchuk@oaklandtownship.org>

Re: Methyl Mercaptan at New Gas Facility on Sheldon Road

To Robert Yager

Cc Adam Kline; Jamie Moore; Lou Danek; Andy Zale; Dave Mabry; Dominic Abbate; Jack Elder; John Giannangeli; Lana Mangiapane; Robin Buxar

Bob,

I forgot to mention that we have had a couple very minor spills of the odoriser at the Sheldon Rd and Dutton rd Consumers facilities. They just did a complete upgrade to the facility on Dutton and I believe they are updating the facility on Sheldon.