

# Williston man camps get deadline to close

AMY DALRYMPLE  
Forum News Service

WILLISTON – Williston man camps will be required to close by Sept. 1 under an ordinance approved August 9, but operators could seek permission to reopen in the future if a demand for oil worker housing returns.

The Williston City Commission voted 5-0 to phase out temporary workforce housing, giving companies until May 1, 2018, to remove facilities and until Aug. 1, 2018, to clean up the sites.

Previously, commissioners had voted 3-2 to require man camps in and around Williston to close by July 1, but the businesses have been in limbo after a federal judge issued an order preventing Williston from enforcing the ordinance.

Commissioners considered a revised ordinance with the Sept. 1 deadline, which was met with protests by several

camp owners and oil industry representatives. The ordinance requires a second reading before it is final.

Among those raising objections was Gary Thompson of Lodging Solutions, which owns the land north of Williston where Target Logistics operates worker housing facilities. Thompson, of Alexandria, Minn., offered to sell the commissioner his property, which he said is now worthless.

“I don’t think it’s fair,” Thompson said. “Why can’t we let the marketplace decide this?”

Brent Eslinger, senior district manager for Halliburton, said 65 percent of the company’s Williston workforce is now local, but the employer wants to be ready with housing if the demand for temporary workers returns. Halliburton owns the Muddy River Lodge in Williston, which Eslinger said the company may propose to use as conference space.

Commissioner Denette Piesik, who previously opposed the ban on temporary housing, said many camps closed in anticipation of the July 1 deadline and found other housing for their workers.

Piesik said she supports the new deadline because there’s no longer a housing shortage and the revision allows the facilities to remain at their current sites.

“If it did boom again, that housing would be there,” Piesik said.

Commissioner Brad Bekkedahl said he thinks the oil market is poised for steep peaks and valleys, which could again create a housing shortage in Williston.

“If pricing conditions warrant, we’re not going to see the rig count go from 30 to 40, we’re going to see the rig count go over 100,” Bekkedahl said.

man camp owners also can bring proposals to the city to repurpose their facilities to hotels or a different use, which

some are already doing.

The debate is likely to continue in U.S. District Court in Bismarck, where Target Logistics, Lodging Solutions and Halliburton have an ongoing case challenging the city’s efforts to eliminate workforce housing.

U.S. District Court Judge Daniel Hovland issued a preliminary injunction that prevented Williston from enforcing the ordinance with the July 1 deadline. Hovland ruled that the man camp operators are likely to prevail in their argument that the city needed a 4-1 supermajority vote to approve the ordinance.

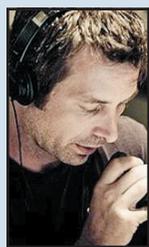
Boston attorney Benjamin Tymann, who represents Target Logistics and Lodging Solutions, told commissioners he strongly believes they’re in danger of violating that injunction by requiring the camps to close in three weeks.

The next hearing in the court case is a scheduling conference on Sept. 19.

## ■ COLUMN ■

# Another good sign of the times: Catfish event supported by energy companies

In a time when energy headlines are dominated by job shrinkage, industry downturns and low oil prices, it refresh-



**JASON SPIESS**  
For Bakken Breakout  
Weekly

ing and encouraging to see energy companies continue to support community events.

The latest such event is API Dickinson’s 28th Annual Catfish Fry, which will be held in Dickinson at the West River Ice Rink from 5 to 11 pm Friday, August 19.

According to the API Dickinson website, The Dickinson Chapter of the American Petroleum Institute is a non-profit organization comprised of service-oriented individuals who serve the local oil and gas industry as well as the surrounding community. The members provide a forum for the discussion of energy related issues and promoting improvement of the energy industry

through education and community action.

The Catfish Fry is one of their annual events that allows community interaction, fundraising and professional networking.

“We fly in Catfish from down south and cook it up for you,” Wyoming Casing’s Kristy Baumgartner said. “We will also have étouffée rice, buns, Bakken beans and other goodies. There are also some beverages, too.”

According to Tiffany Stierer, MBI Energy Service, this year the catfish fry has five major oil and gas service sponsors. “The major sponsors for the 28th Annual Catfish Fry are Bob’s Oilfield, Wyoming Casing, WellPro, Trotter Construction and MBI Energy Services,” Stierer said.

In addition to the free food, there will be free beverages for both adults and kids at the event. There will be a limited amount of complimentary beer for the attendees too. There will also be a cash bar set up as well.

“It’s a very fun event, kid friendly, music all night, a lot of people to mingle with to just have a good time,” Stierer said.

Proving that safety is paramount in the oil patch, Stierer said there is even

a free shuttle service for a ride home if anyone needs some. Stierer reiterated this is a family event “with children there all night long”.

“People show up around four or five o’clock and get in line,” Stierer said. “The line can get pretty long for the free food.”

Once the attendees make their way through the line and get their food, free beverages will be available along with a night of music.

“We definitely encourage people to come out with their family and enjoy some free food,” Stierer said. “It is a sign of appreciation from the service companies and sponsors who are putting it on.”

In addition to the food and festivities, API is also holding a raffle. Tickets are \$50 and winners will be drawn that night.

“The proceeds from the raffle go to the API Scholarship Fund,” Stierer said. “So we are really excited about that as well.”

Stierer said two years ago they raised approximately \$40,000 for scholarships and this year they are currently at “about \$20,000”. In addition to a variety of fundraisers, the raffle is a key component to the scholarship fundraising.

“Some of the prizes for the raffle include 2016 Chevy Camaro SS, a Polaris Razor 900 S, a Polaris 570 ATV, four Minnesota Vikings tickets, a Las Vegas trip and some cash as well,” Baumgartner said.

Attendance varies each year, according to Stierer.

“I would say the event draws between 1,000 and 2,000 people,” Stierer said. “Each year is a little different depending on what is going on in town.”

Even with the downturn in the energy industry, both Stierer and Baumgartner anticipate a good turnout for the 28th Annual Catfish Fry.

“It is a free event open to all ages and can’t wait to see everyone come out for this event,” Baumgartner said.



*Jason Spiess is an award-winning journalist, talk show host, publisher, author and executive producer. Spiess is a North Dakota native and NDSU graduate. He currently creates multimedia content for newspapers, magazines, and online news services. He is also the host of Building the Bakken, MonDak Oil-Field Review and Coffee & Capitalism Radio. Spiess also is author of the book Building the Bakken. For more information or to contact Spiess, email jason@buildingthebakken.com.*