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Rosebud residents not too happy with EnCana's plans

By Isabell Fooks

Valley Times staff writer

Rosebud residents are not happy with EnCana's plans for developing more gas wells in the Rosebud area.

More than 200 people crowded into the Rosebud Community Centre last Thursday for an EnCana Open House with the opportunity to ask questions about proposed developments. Mark

Taylor, business unit leader for the Rosebud area, started off by explaining EnCana's plans which include drilling an additional two to three wells per section.

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Rosebud residents unhappy with plans

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EnCana currently has 42 sections centred around Rosebud.

There are approximately 400 wells and just over four wells per section in the Rosebud area right now.

"We hope to drill an additional two to three wells per section here," Taylor said.

"This is a \$40 to \$50 million spending program over the next three to five years. That would develop all of the gas reserves."

While Taylor stated that the purpose of the meeting was to hear questions from Rosebud residents, he attempted to end the question period at one hour as it was originally scheduled for only 45 minutes from 6:30-7:15 p.m.

This sparked an outrage with some people in the hall, especially Ken Sobey from Gleichen, who is also the co-chair of the Wheatland Surface Rights Group.

"I drove up here tonight from Gleichen and then you guys shut it off," Sobey said. "Let's be polite folks."

Taylor didn't want to continue the question period and added that he had 25 EnCana staff members present who wanted to get home to their families.

This prompted at least one Rosebud resident to

storm out of the room and after thinking it over for a couple minutes, Taylor decided to continue the question period.

Most local residents raised legitimate concerns about water quality, traffic

issues through Rosebud and esthetics.

Jonathan Wright of East Coulee asked how the number of additional wells being drilled around Rosebud will impact the traffic through Rosebud.

Taylor said that the most traffic is generated when a well is being drilled.

"When they are operating we do have to visit them once per year," Taylor said.

"Once an area is developed there will be very little traffic in this area compared to what you are seeing today."

Randall Wiebe from Rosebud asked about esthetics. He said that since the Canadian Badlands is a major tourist destination what does EnCana plan to do to make Rosebud look beautiful.

Taylor said that obviously esthetics is a major issue.

"If you don't see them or hear them (wells) you probably don't care," he said. "You are the people that have to live with what we do. We have not come up with a solution yet. We are probably going to have to try different things."

Another farmer piped up that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

"The only thing better than laying on the side of the hill looking at your cows is

lying on the side of a hill in the shade of a pumpjack," he said.

Another farmer asked what will happen to the wells if EnCana sells to a junior company.

Taylor added that

EnCana hopes to make use of what the company already has in place.

"We don't sell or give away anything," he said. "We make use of what we have."

Debbie Sidner, owner of a guest house at Redland, said that she is concerned about the water quality and asked how citizens can scrutinize what EnCana does.

Taylor said that the company is definitely aware of the water quality in Redland.

"We look after the situation even if we don't think there it is our problem," he said.

"Our current policy is to go to wells within a 400 m radius of where we are drilling."

Farmer Lee Christensen asked if EnCana will be doing forced entry on to properties because he doesn't want EnCana on his property.

Taylor said that no forced entries will be done.

"As far as I can recall I can't recall my team members doing a forced entry," he said. "Currently the approach we try to take is to work with the landowner."

Sidner asked another question about water and added that she would like a written assurance from EnCana that her water source would not be hurt.

Taylor added that information is dealt with privately.

"When it comes to issues specifically around water wells we cannot share information," he said.

Another person asked



Mark Taylor of EnCana answered questions at the Open House at the Rosebud Community Centre last Thursday.

Valley Times photo by Isabell Fooks

about having more of an idea of the intentions of EnCana in the Rosebud area.

He also asked if EnCana would do an environmental impact study for the area.

"The short answer is that we would be happy to participate in some kind of thing," Taylor said.

Elaine Bellamy of Rosebud asked about weed seeds getting on her land and she also asked why farmers are paid different prices.

Taylor said that he could not answer the weed question definitively and he referred the money question to Brody Allen, the surface land man working for EnCana.

Robin Digby of East

Coulee asked how traffic will increase through Rosebud in the future and if wells will need to be refractured.

Taylor said that he didn't think wells would be refractured in the future.

Don Turner of Rosebud asked how many other oil companies could residents be looking at dealing with in the future.

Taylor said that EnCana is the biggest player in the area and only one other oil company has rights on land along the river.

Another person asked if EnCana could case wells down to 500 feet.

Taylor said that most water wells are at 180 feet or shallower and surface casing is on a well to well basis.

Finally, Paul Muir of Rosebud summed up the evening by stating that no one is really satisfied with the answers to most of the questions throughout the

landowner or work in the town or you work with EnCana there has to be a way that we can all have our interests met."

Taylor agreed with Muir that EnCana has to have more meetings and work more with the people in Rosebud.

"The only reason we are here is because we think we can move forward and find a solution," Taylor said.

"We would not be out here otherwise. We do care what you think and we wanted to come out here with a plan."

Taylor added that he will be back with more EnCana

night.

"In a sense what you are asking of the community here is to enter into a kind of marriage and certainly you would not want to treat your spouse that way," he said.

"Whether you are a

people to have another meeting with Rosebud and area residents in the future.

In the meantime, he is directing anyone with concerns to call Luigi Vescarelli at EnCana's office in Drumheller at 823-1039.