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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 13, 2026
TO: Mayor and City Councilmembers
FROM: Dan Welsh, Chair of the Air Quality Advisory Board
RE: Orphaned Oil & Gas Well Plugging & Abandonment Waiver

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

The Air Quality Advisory Board (AQAB) supports the proposed plugging and abandonment of orphaned oil and gas wells within Larimer County and Fort Collins. To further this objective, the AQAB also supports the proposal to waive the Basic Development Review requirements under Section 4.3.4(F)(6) of the Land Use Code (LUC) for the proposed well plugging project currently being developed under the direction of Larimer County.

The effective and thorough plugging of orphaned oil and gas wells will ensure that any potential contribution to the air quality issues that our region faces will be eliminated from these sources. The removal of surface equipment, optical imaging and leak detection, and soil testing will further assist in removing the visual blight and potential negative environmental impacts of these former operations. Additionally, the proper identification of each well and pipeline location, to be documented with Larimer County and identified with a permanent marker, will help to ensure that proper precaution is taken during future development near these sites.

Based on our understanding of the issue before City Council, the proposal would waive the Basic Development Review requirements stated in LUC 4.3.4(F)(6). The proposed Basic Development Review waiver is specific to the current project only and the waiver would not apply to future activities outside of the current project. In this instance, a Basic Development Review is unnecessary because we understand that City Staff are actively involved in the planning and execution of the proposed well-plugging activities, ensuring that the planned activities will be completed in a manner protective of the environment and public safety. Furthermore, the AQAB understands that all applicable LUC standards governing well plugging will be achieved.

The success of this model will make Fort Collins and Larimer County leaders in Colorado, enabling a faster process for local authorities to plug and abandon orphaned oil and gas wells. The AQAB asks that you join us in supporting this waiver.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to engage on this matter.

Very Respectfully,

The Air Quality Advisory Board

CC: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager
Jacob Castillo, Chief Sustainability Officer
Selina Lujan de Albers, Manager Environmental Sustainability & AQAB Staff Liaison