

# Caroline anti-drilling measure fails to advance

## Town board lacks consensus on proposal to draft a ban

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Caroline -- Two "nay" votes and an abstention killed a resolution that would have allowed the town supervisor to engage lawyers on a pro-bono basis to draft a local law prohibiting unconventional gas drilling in the Town of Caroline.

The vote from the five-person board Tuesday night followed a public hearing on the issue. The Brooktondale Community Center was packed, with some onlookers spilling into the hallway. A passionate and sometimes boisterous majority of residents implored the board to pass the resolution, with only a few dissenting voices.

After two hours of public discussion, each board member addressed the crowd.

With the measure requiring a majority vote to pass, the abstention from board member Peter Hoyt essentially served as a no vote. Despite assurances from town attorney Guy Krogh that full disclosure was sufficient, Hoyt, who holds a gas drilling lease, recused himself from the vote, saying that "I think it's terribly risky and irresponsible for a town board to put itself in the position now of incurring the possible legal expense," of defending a gas-drilling ban.

Voting "no" on the issue were Linda Adams and Toby McDonald. Voting in favor were Dominic Frongillo and Supervisor Don Barber.

A rousing speech by Frongillo made the Community Center feel like a high school basketball gymnasium, with Frongillo representing the home team. His speech, supported by much applause from the crowd, fervently stressed that, rather than worry about a potential lawsuit, "I would risk that we use this moment to recommit to our vision as a community that we would be proud to leave for the next 20 or the next 200 years."

McDonald, the one board member whose position was still unclear, stated a different viewpoint on the inherent risk of a ban. Referring to lawsuits already filed throughout the state, including one in Dryden, McDonald said in a prepared statement that "the

resulting court decisions will provide clarity -- the clarity which we need to know how to proceed on this issue. Until these decisions are forthcoming, I cannot see the board moving forward on this resolution."

Barber said that while he was disappointed with the outcome he applauded the passionate yet civil response from the community, calling it a sign of "good democracy."

It is possible the resolution could be revisited when the board reconvenes after Jan. 1.