

Council abandons plan for natural gas station

By Doug Keeler, Midway Driller City Editor

Taft Midway Driller

March 4, 2004

The Taft City Council agreed with the recommendations of city staff to abandon plans to develop a compressed natural gas fueling station.

The council agreed that spending nearly \$500,000 to build the fueling station is no longer advantageous.

Public Works Director Gary Dabbs wrote a staff report outlining the reasons the project to provide a fueling center for a clean-burning fuel no longer makes sense.

Compressed natural gas, or CNG, was once seen as an alternative to traditional fuel that burned much cleaner.

However, new low and ultra low sulphur diesel fuel coming on the market make the CNG alternative much less attractive, so fewer CNG-fueled vehicles are being built.

The city originally planned to use the CNG station to fuel transit vehicles and even school buses in the area.

In addition, City Manager Becky Napier said, construction of the station could end up being much more expensive than originally planned.

The city originally planned to use funding obtained through the Kern Council of Governments with 12 percent local matching funds to build the station.

But Napier said California City recently spent \$900,000 on a CNG facility.

With no objections, the council voted to agree with the staff assessment and abandon the project.

The council also unanimously approved a memorandum of understanding with the Community Action Partnership of Kern County to build a childcare center in Taft.

The bulk of the funding for construction of the center is expected to come through two Community Development Block Grants the city plans to apply for.

The council also met in closed session for about 10 minutes to discuss the city's civil prosecution of Gretchen Belli and Jacob Ritchey and unspecified potential litigation.

No action was taken, Mayor Ray Hatch said after the closed session.

[Political news addressing air quality:](#)

Edwards drops out of race, endorses Kerry

By Tom Raum, Associated Press

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RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) - John Edwards ended his pursuit of the Democratic presidential nomination on Wednesday, pledging to "do everything in my power" to help John Kerry win the White House.

"And I ask you to join me in this cause," he told cheering supporters.

Edwards said he was suspending his campaign, signaling an end to his active effort to gain the presidency after winning only one state out of 30 to hold primaries and caucuses so far.

The North Carolina senator already has announced plans not to seek re-election to Congress when his term expires at the end of the year. But already, there is speculation that Kerry might tap him for a running mate in the fall campaign.

That would have met with approval from supporters gathered in a crowded high school gymnasium where Edwards formally ended his quest for the White House. "Kerry-Edwards" read a scattering of signs held aloft in the crowd, not just two names but also a suggested ticket for the fall campaign.

Edwards, who until recently had been depicting Kerry as a Washington insider unable to bring about needed change, praised his Senate colleague unstintingly.

He said the Massachusetts senator had battled for "more jobs, better health care, cleaner air, cleaner water, a safer world" and more.

"They are the causes of our party. They are the causes of America and they are the reason we will prevail," Edwards said.

While Kerry won the nomination and Howard Dean was briefly the front-runner in the race, Edwards had staying power with an optimistic message and a style that avoided criticism of his rivals.

Over and over, he pledged to end what he called a society of "two Americas," one for the rich, the other for the rest of the country.

Edwards came home Wednesday to announce formally his departure from the race at the Raleigh high school that two of his children once attended, including his son Wade, who died in 1996 at age 16 in a car accident.

Voters consistently gave Edwards high marks for his positive message, and his approval ratings topped the field. His "two Americas" campaign theme - that there are two Americas, one for the rich and powerful and the other for everybody else - struck a chord with many voters.

Edwards' upbringing was a central theme to his populist message, and he scarcely missed an opportunity to talk about his upbringing as the son of a textile mill worker who lost his job when the factory closed. Yet his sunny side and common-man approach didn't give Democrats enough reason to choose him over Kerry.

Edwards' appealing campaign style and high positives should serve him well in the future, Democratic strategists suggest. If Bush were re-elected in November, Edwards could run again in 2008.

Edwards lost all 10 Super Tuesday contests. His advisers had hoped victories in Georgia, Ohio and Minnesota would carry him into four March 9 primaries in the South.

Edwards, 50, became a millionaire as a plaintiff's trial lawyer, making most of his money in medical malpractice cases. His 1998 election to the Senate was his first attempt at public office.

Kerry has said he will "try to find the best person" as his running mate. While remaining noncommittal on whom that might be, Kerry said, "There is no doubt John Edwards brings a compelling voice to our party."

Edwards, who stepped up his criticism of Kerry only in the last week, called his four-term Senate colleague "my friend" and said, "He's run a strong, powerful campaign."

Not everyone is enthusiastic about the notion of a Kerry-Edwards ticket.

The American Tort Reform Association asserted on Wednesday that choosing Edwards would be a liability to Kerry's race for the White House.

"Senator Edwards' campaign has been funded by personal injury lawyers who would drive a pro-litigation, anti-civil justice reform agenda," association President Sherman Joyce said. "Kerry should be wary of aligning himself with someone who is beholden to these Learjet lawyers."

Although he is only 10 years younger than Kerry, Edwards looks boyish and is relatively inexperienced in both government and international relations, liabilities in the eyes of some Democrats.

At the beginning of the year, former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean was viewed as the front-runner, while both Kerry and Edwards were far back in the pack. Edwards rose dramatically after an

unexpectedly strong second-place finish in Iowa. He won only a single state - South Carolina, where he was born - despite a string of strong second-place finishes.

He had been poised to withdraw on at least three previous election nights, beginning with South Carolina's primary a month ago, spokeswoman Jennifer Palmieri said. But each week he found something in the returns encouraging enough to continue - until Kerry won so many delegates Tuesday night.

"There was too big a gap," Palmieri said.

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Thursday, March 4:](#)

Pollution is not ag's fault

This year and in late 2003, we farmers were introduced to the results of three new laws:

1. The elimination of all agricultural burning within the next six years, and the mandatory reduction of airborne dust associated with any of the jobs I perform on my property (such as harvest).
2. A new program that will require me to be responsible for all of the runoff from my ranches, even in a 100-year storm.
3. A new program that taxes me (they call it a "fee," so that the regulations associated with taxes are avoided) for each of the diesel engines that I installed on my wells to pump the water that produces the food that you love to eat.

All these laws were created to stop the agricultural community from polluting the air and water that are so necessary to all of us.

Within three days of a recent rain, the air turned a nasty dark brown and the view of the beautiful snow-covered Sierra began to disappear.

Guess what? We farmers have not been harvesting. We have not been disking dust; we have not been pumping water with our diesel engines. We have not used our tractors. And we have not been allowed to burn our prunings.

Is it possible that farmers are not the main source of pollution in the valley? Is it possible that we are just an easy target with very little political clout? As long as our supermarkets are full of cheap, nutritious food, there will not be any complaints from consumers. However, mark my words, you are killing the goose that is supplying you with wonderful golden eggs.

Enjoy your new monster houses. Enjoy your cars that are getting bigger and bigger. You cannot possibly be the cause.

John Arnold

Modesto