



Belmont County needs land for development

Belmont County Looking at New Development

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By CASEY JUNKINS – For the Times Leader

ST. CLAIRSVILLE - As sand and cement trucks surround the new Stingray Pressure Pumping office at Fox Commerce Park, Sue Douglass knows Belmont County needs more land for development.

The 125-acre industrial park west of St. Clairsville is now full, thanks in part to the burgeoning oil and natural gas industry.

Located near the south end of the park, Stingray is an oilfield services company that opened earlier this year. Chesapeake Energy and Great Plains Oilfield Rental have offices at the north end of the development.

Article Photos



Photo by Casey Junkins

Sue Douglass, Belmont County Community Improvement Corp. and Department of Development director, hopes to find more land for development now that Fox Commerce Park is full.

"These companies are coming in here looking to do business," said Douglass, Belmont County Community Improvement Corp. and Department of Development director. "They want to get in place so they can go to work as quickly as possible."

According to the trade journal Oil & Gas Investor, Stingray is 50 percent owned by Gulfport Energy.

Many eastern Ohio residents who originally signed leases with Wishgard LLC or Tri-Star Energy have seen those contracts turned over to Gulfport, while Gulfport has also signed many county landowners to leases on its own.

Some property owners have received as much as \$5,900 per acre in lease agreements, with as much as 20 percent of the production royalties.

Stingray President Bob Maughmer said the company will hire 50-80 people from the St. Clairsville area, noting the Fox Commerce location is within 40-50 miles of its field locations.

"This coal mining area has been depressed a long time. We're going to hire from the community," he told Oil & Gas Investor.

Douglass said the area's history as a large coal and steel producing region should serve as a reminder of both the potential benefit and the potential challenges the drilling industry presents.

"We have an opportunity to take what we have learned from the past and apply it to this new industry," she said. "What can we do better to ensure that we get the most benefit from this industry?"

With oil and gas companies still looking for space to build, Douglass said the county is now taking a survey to determine possible new development sites.

"We are happy with the way the park looks now, but we are nowhere near finished with development in Belmont County," she said. "We are working with companies to try to help them fill their needs."

One potential new development site is near the Oakview Juvenile Residential Center along National Road. Douglass said Belmont County commissioners voted to allow her organization to sell roughly 6 acres of property at the site. Though she would not name the company interested in the site, Douglass said negotiations are ongoing.

Douglass declined to provide employment estimates for Fox Commerce Park as a whole, or for additional proposed developments.

"Every employer we work with tells us they are going to hire as many people as they can. We do the best we can to help them stay in business so they can employ as many as possible," she said.