

## Council slates special meeting Members to consider reaffirming previous stance against reservoir

By Jodi Sheridan Texarkana Gazette

The Texarkana, Texas, City Council will convene in a special meeting at noon Friday to consider reaffirming its previous stance against the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir.

Council members approved calling the meeting at their meeting Monday night following a presentation by International Paper officials about how the controversial reservoir, a plan by the state to address longterm water needs in the Dallas area, would devastate the business.

Don Forst, the IP Texarkana's mill manager of operational services, said the city council played a pivotal role in 2002 in getting the Region D Water Planning Group to bump the reservoir from their plan.

"That debate is currently raging in Austin right now," said Forst of Marvin Nichols and other reservoirs, thus spelling out the need for the city council's reaffirmation of opposition with another resolution.

Currently, the most notable of all the reservoir bills in Austin is Senate Bill 3, which when passed out of the Senate contained language designating 19 reservoir sites as unique reservoir sites, including Marvin Nichols.

State Sen. Kevin Eltife, R-Tyler, was able to get hold of it before it left the Senate and tacked on an amendment guaranteeing Region D some of the water, assigning all construction costs to Region C and forming a joint committee to study water issues like mitigation to determine if Marvin Nichols and other reservoirs are really needed.

Region C includes the Dallas metroplex. Region D includes Bowie, Cass, Morris, Red River, Titus and 14 other counties.

Once in the House Natural Resources Committee, several amendments were approved, including one that struck Marvin Nichols from the bill.

However, it still faces the threat of being added back on once it gets to the House floor.

Forst, along with Mill Communications Manager Amanda Black Keeney and Doug Wadley, the Texarkana Mill environmental manager, called this issue their "BRAC," in terms of how critical stopping Marvin Nichols is to the survival of IP in Texarkana.

"It is very much a threat to our long term viability," said Forst.

They told the council of how the project would harm the forest and paper products industry, take away critical water resources from the city and hurt many area businesses that rely on the economic stability IP provides.

Wadley said an additional reservoir on the Sulphur River would threaten the water flow used

for manufacturing products and providing water to nearby towns.

They also said the expected population growth paired with the adequate lake levels needed to supply water and the threat that Marvin Nichols would provide to that is harmful.

“Our manufacturing processes require plentiful wood supply and adequate water flows on both sides of Lake Wright Patman. Any reservoir on the Sulphur River disrupts those necessary flows and eliminates extreme amounts of forestland in a forestry dependent region,” said Forst before the meeting.

Officials also pointed out the negative impact the reservoir would have on jobs.

Ward 5 Council Member Steve Mayo wondered where the water Marvin Nichols would need in the first place would come from.

“How do they plan on filling this lake up,” he asked.

Forst said it’s not been wholly addressed.

“I think they believe the rain will come and fill everything up eventually,” he said.

Wadley said they would have to dam the river to fill it up, therefore preventing flow to Lake Wright Patman, which in turn would have a devastating effect on IP.

Mayo also brought up the need for such a lake. He said he had friends who owned property around Cooper Lake, which has in recent years experienced low levels and a decline of activity.

Mayo said they were promised things, but now folks are out of business.

Forst said there was a rosy economic picture being painted by supporters that wasn’t in fact the opposite.

“They’re making promises they can’t keep, in my opinion,” he said.

Ward 6 Council Member George Nuckolls said he and Ward 2 Council Member Willie Ray had an opportunity to visit with lawmakers in Austin on the issue, and want to keep it on the frontburner.

“We still need to remind them to really stay on it,” he said.

Mayo said he wanted to be more educated, so he would like to hear another side of it.

IP officials pointed out a group in Northeast Texas, called the Northeast Texas Water Coalition, and Mayor James Bramlett said they could be invited to a special meeting to talk to the Council.

But Ray said she’s “been in this for a long time” and has heard both sides, and remains steadfast in her opposition to the reservoir and in her support for local jobs.

“I feel strong about let’s get with it again and support them (IP),” she said.