

July 15, 1972 P.E.B.
Gas Seepage Protested to Richmond Council

A group of irked residents from Canob Park, Wyoming, in Richmond, last night appeared before the town council to protest the seepage of gasoline into their artesian wells and aimed their complaints at the Mobil Oil Corporation.

Herbert Arnold, council president, at the conclusion said, "This council will start in right now to get some action." He said the council would get all data on the matter and try to get the appropriate authorities to bring about a solution.

An attorney representing the Mobil corporation triggered the anger of the affected residents in the hall when he said, "You are making a very bold presumption" by

asserting that Mobil is causing the problem. He said it was up to the residents to prove it was Mobil that was responsible for the seepage.

Eugene Mahoney, the Mobil representative, said extensive tests were made by the Arthur D. Little Co. and there were insufficient samplings to determine whose gasoline is leaking.

Edward M. Botelle, attorney representing Mr. and Mrs. William Pepler of 93 Chariho Drive, Wyoming, said the water was so badly contaminated the Peplers have not been able to drink it for more than a year. He called upon the council to assist the residents to solve the matter

if Mobil takes the position of "sue us and prove it."

Asserting that residents are in no financial position to battle Mobil, he said they will be looking to the council for some assistance. Mr. Botelle said "there is no question to me Mobil came in and contaminated the water."

Frederick A. Stanley, fire chief of Hope Valley, said the only gasoline station in the complex off Interstate 95 on Route 138 that did not have pressure tests was the Mobil station. Mr. Stanley said the other companies had requested tests and he ran them.

Because it didn't have the tests done, Mr. Stanley said, the Mobil station was installed in violation of state

regulations. He said the Nappi Construction Co. had installed the tanks, covered them, and blacktopped the area before anyone could check them.

Mr. Stanley said a leak did occur at the Mobil station and the company was notified. He said the Nappi firm indicated it was swamp gas, but an engineer with Mobil confirmed it was definitely between the tanks and the pumps, with approximately 2,000 gallons lost.

Mr. Stanley said the engineer in writing told him the leak was repaired.

Mr. Mahoney told the council his company had replaced at least three wells in nearby homes. Mr. Mahoney said there was no way to guarantee seepage would not reoccur

into the newly-drilled wells.

He said there was no way to tell if the gasoline was Mobil.

Wilson Lamb, a town resident, called for the council to close the station and call in experts to trace the gasoline until all state codes are complied with.

Mrs. Joyce Saunders of 92 Chariho Drive asked Mr. Mahoney what was Mobil's position on the matter. Mr. Mahoney said, "We have never admitted to being at fault." He said the firm took a moral responsibility in installing the three wells, not a legal responsibility.

Mr. Arnold said the council believes that, on the basis of the facts available, Mobil is responsible. He said the sta-

tion did have a leak and did see fit to install the new wells.

Chief Stanley said the Mobil station was installed before the other stations, and had a leakage prior to the other installations. He said if the council directed him he would take the time off from work to retest all the stations. The council had no immediate response.

The council reappointed Harry Chatalian for a five-year term on the zoning board. He has served as its secretary. A. Ray Smith was reappointed as an auxiliary member of the zoning board. Mr. Arnold said he was hopeful the vacant position of tax assessor would be filled at the August meeting.