

A Quandary in Ponder

As a member of the community in or around the city of Ponder, you will be an interested and active participant in a city council debate over the use of a controversial new pesticide, which has been proposed for use in the protection of cropland surrounding Ponder.

About Ponder

The city of Ponder is a rural community 60 miles outside of Megalopolis. In recent years, Ponder has been undergoing a steady transformation into a distant, but feasible, bedroom community of Megalopolis. Despite this transformation, much of the charm of old Ponder remains. Main Street attracts hundreds of visitors from Megalopolis every weekend for a stroll along an authentic wood-plank boardwalk to buy fresh produce at the farmer's market and visit numerous antique and curio shops. Ponder is surrounded by orchards which grow a variety of stone fruit including peaches, nectarines, and apricots. The stone fruit of Ponder frequently wins prizes for taste and quality at the State Fair. The rolling hills covered with orchards provide a scenic and aesthetically pleasing buffer between the urban sprawl of Megalopolis and Ponder.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>
1960	10,000	1990	18,000
1970	10,000	2000	32,000
1980	12,000	Present	40,000

In the 1960s and 70s, over 80% of the population of Ponder was dependent on local agriculture for their income. Today, less than 20% of the population derives their income from local agriculture. In order to accommodate recent refugees from Megalopolis, there are many new housing developments and custom-built homes. Most of these new homes are built on the outskirts of town, adjacent to the orchards. For many residents the presence of the orchards was a major factor in their decision to move to Ponder, and in most cases the homes adjacent to the orchards have the highest property values. Most of the recent immigrants to Ponder are employed by one of several high tech and biotech companies that recently chose the city for their headquarters. As a result, there has been a boom in the housing market as the well-paid employees of these companies move their families to Ponder. Several new schools were built in the past five years to accommodate the resulting influx of school age children.

The Problem

Recently, the orchards surrounding Ponder came under attack by a pest, the stone-fruit beetle, which is new to the area. The beetle lays its eggs on the surface of a stone fruit; after hatching, the larvae burrow through the skin and consume the fruit. None of the established, tested and, approved pesticides is effective at combating the beetle. Just recently, the new chemical, Safeion, was developed by the Remunerative Chemical Company to combat the stone-fruit beetle. Safeion was developed this past year and its health effects on humans have not been definitively determined. The structural similarity between Safeion and several known carcinogens leads many experts to believe that Safeion should be considered a suspected carcinogen. Despite the lack of authoritative knowledge about Safeion, government regulators have given the Farmers of Ponder approval to use Safeion on a temporary basis due to the fact that without it their orchards will be destroyed.

The City Council Meeting

A local group of residents would like to stop the proposed spraying of Safeion, and they have presented the following resolution for a vote by the city council:

No chemical agent, which has not been proven completely safe to humans, will be applied to any fields within the city of Ponder.

Each of the following groups will send at least two representatives to speak before the council. Following the meeting, the council will vote on whether or not to pass the resolution.

The United Residents Against Safeion—This is a group of Ponder residents that moved to Ponder in the last five to ten years and are raising families, many with small children. They are opposed to the application of Safeion, in anyway, under any circumstances.

The Farmers—The farmers are farming land that has been in their family for many generations. All of the farmers agree that the only way to produce a viable crop is to spray Safeion. All of the farmers will go bankrupt and lose their farms without a viable crop.

The Ponder Heritage Society—This is a group of long-time Ponder residents, many of whom live in the same home in which several generations of their family were raised. Most of the members own the businesses along Main Street or one of the Bed and Breakfasts that relies on tourism. They support the spraying of Safeion to preserve local business and their way of life. Many are somewhat belligerent towards the newcomers, believing that it was foolish to build new homes close to orchards.

The Ponder Parent Organization—This is a group of Ponder parents with concerns about the safety of spraying around schools, especially two schools, which are completely surrounded by orchards.

The Ponder Farm Workers Association—The union, which represents the farm workers in the city of Ponder, has sent negotiators to represent their membership. Their contention is that the organization's members will lose their livelihood if the orchards are not sprayed with Safeion.

The City Council—This group of elected officials will vote on the resolution at the end of the meeting.

The Remunerative Chemical Company—A representative from the public relations department of the company, which manufactures Safeion has come to Ponder to discuss the application of Safeion and the possibility of immediate or potential immediate or lingering danger to the residents of Ponder.

Character Bio (due 2 days prior to the city council meeting)

Write a one-page biography of your character. Include the following:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> your character's name | <input type="checkbox"/> occupation | <input type="checkbox"/> a photograph (at least 2" x 2") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> age | <input type="checkbox"/> how long you have lived in Ponder | <input type="checkbox"/> other information you choose to reveal. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> address | | |

Postlab

- ✍ Summarize the meeting and issue your opinion of the outcome in a one-page essay.
- ✍ The essay is due on the school day following the meeting.

Each student's grade will depend on the essay, how well prepared and represented their group is at the city council meeting, and the degree to which they collaborate and participate during the activity.

