

Meeting digs up concerns about quarry

Water table, proposed haul route top list of concerns

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While the City of Hamilton isn't yet in a position where it can approve or deny a quarry application for northeast Flamborough, neighbouring residents have already decided.

"Your application has been denied," Waterdown resident Tom Reid told Lowndes Holdings Corporation representatives at a packed public information meeting last Thursday night in Carlisle's Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary School. "The key reason for denial is our groundwater," he said echoing the concerns of many who stepped up to the microphone to talk about the proposed Mountsberg Quarry's potential impact on the quality and quantity of water feeding rural wells in the area as well as the communal wells serving Carlisle.

It is the City of Hamilton, under the Planning Act, which has the final say on whether the proposal will be approved. Whatever it decides, however, is expected to be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) either by the applicant or by FORCE (Friends of the Rural Community and the Environment), a community group strongly opposed to the quarry.

An emotional, yet civil, crowd of about 400 people turned out for the meeting, which included presentations focusing on the 68-hectare (168-acre) quarry planned for the northeast corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line. If approved, it will be the eighth largest quarry in Canada.

According to David Lowndes, president of Lowndes Holding Corp., the quarry would take about 3,000,000 tonnes of aggregate from the site per year at maximum production.

Bob Long, Lowndes' environmental engineer for the project, explained that the new aggregate, used to build roads, schools and houses, is needed to replace production being lost from two neighbouring quarries, Milton Limestone, which is now closed and Halton Crushed Stone, which has exhausted its supply of amabel limestone.

While proponents argue that the Flamborough site is one of the best sources for the high-grade limestone, opponents are equally adamant that the site isn't acceptable for numerous environmental reasons, including its potential impact on groundwater.

"This is not an acceptable site. No reasonable person would approve this quarry," FORCE chair Graham Flint said to the partisan anti-quarry crowd.

Flint, who lives in a nearby rural subdivision, said about 200 homes are adjacent to the quarry, and warned that they and many others will be impacted by the development which threatens "to starve wells of water" and threaten Carlisle's municipal water supply.

Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy told the crowd that even the proponent's hydrogeological studies couldn't stand up under scrutiny when an independent peer review of their findings revealed that "without mitigation" the proposed quarry will likely have a negative effect on residential wells and will also affect the capture zone, or underground sources, of the Carlisle municipal wells.

"The (Lowndes') application has not demonstrated to date that this quarry can be supported by the studies so far," McCarthy said.

Stan Holiday, Hamilton's senior planner coordinating the project, agreed that the proponent hasn't demonstrated that the application can be supported. "He is prepared to do additional studies," he told the crowd.

Steven Rowe, Hamilton's aggregate planning advisor, described the application as "very much a work in progress." A new hydrogeology report is being prepared by Lowndes, he said, and work is also required on a haul route for the aggregate, as well as noise and vibration impacts. "We're not just reviewing; we're waiting for a lot of material," he explained.

Long said there are engineering solutions available to mitigate groundwater impacts by the quarry. He suggested a recirculation system will cause only "a minimal loss" of water in nearby wells.

"Our research shows that with proper water management in place, those wells will not be adversely affected," he said.

An on-site demonstration of the recirculation system will be conducted this summer and there will be an opportunity for public review and comment, Long said. But meeting attendees voiced misgivings about how

effective the system would be.

"It's an untested mitigation system," Carlisle resident Gwen Todd said. "It has not been shown or proven that it can work at this site."

When she challenged Long to tell her where the groundwater recirculation system is working under the same conditions as the proposed site and how long it has been working, he agreed to provide her with an answer, "in writing through the city," before the end of April.

Public concerns about groundwater impacts dominated much of the discussion.

Former Halton Hills councillor Robert Heaton wanted to know how far-reaching the effects might be.

"Is the Campbellville aquifer part of this or not?" he asked

Dan Moore, an engineer with Jager Hims, tried to answer the question, but the ambiguity of his response was not lost on the crowd. While he said his initial reaction was, 'No,' because the Campbellville aquifer is up gradient and too far from the proposed quarry, he also allowed that all aquifers are tied together.

The proposed haul route for the quarry also generated a number of comments. As many as 1,000 truck trips per day along country roads will be required during peak periods to transport the aggregate to its customers, most of which will be in the Greater Toronto area.

Long said the company's preferred haul route is to run north on Milborough Line, east on Campbellville Road, north on Twiss Road and east on Reid Sideroad to Hwy. 401. Customers in Hamilton and Niagara will get their aggregate delivered by trucks that will turn westward off Milborough Line on Campbellville Road, following it to Hwy. 6.

Alternate routes are also being studied, including one that proceeds along Milborough Line and connects with Hwy. 401 at a new interchange for eastbound traffic.

Milton councillor Jan Mowbray of Ward 3 wanted to know where the quarry trucks and other traffic would be diverted to if the event of an accident along Hwy. 401 between Guelph Line and Hwy. 25 - a fairly common occurrence, she suggested.

Mowbray also spoke of possible congestion problems for quarry trucks as they approach the Reid Sideroad and Guelph Line intersection before proceeding onto Hwy. 401.

The intersection currently carries a stop sign and it's not unusual to see traffic backed up there, she noted.

Mowbray said it's important that Reid Sideroad not be congested with traffic because a fire station and emergency medical service facility is located there. She also said the Dufferin Quarry has caused "a huge problem" with trucks lining up as early as 4 a.m. on Dublin Line or Hwy. 25 to gain early access to the quarry. In some cases, they line up on the shoulder of the road, but where there isn't a shoulder, they sit idling on the road, she said.

Halton Region will hold a public information meeting about the proposed quarry on May 3 at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Conservation Halton building, 2596 Britannia Road West.

Because the Lowndes application must adhere to the province's Greenbelt Plan provisions, Flint feels encouraged that "the criteria are in our favour."

The quarry site is rife with 11 environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs), five provincially and regionally significant wetlands (PSWs and RSWs), five areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs) and one natural area, all of which must be protected from excavation, he added.

But Long counters that Lowndes will not excavate within PSWs or designated woodlands and has reduced the size of the proposed excavation area by 30 per cent to accommodate Greenbelt Plan guidelines. The Plan "permits quarries with conditions," he told the crowd at last week's meeting.

He also outlined some of the economic benefits of the quarry, which will employ 110 people and generate \$11 million in economic activity, including \$215,000 in annual taxes to the City of Hamilton.

Councillor McCarthy, pledging to fight the proposal aggressively, later told the crowd that the impact of the quarry "cannot be mitigated by financial compensation."



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