

St. Marys applies for further rezoning

Parcel of land to be used as entrance

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St. Marys CBM has filed an application with the City of Hamilton for rezoning and an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) for a 10.6-acre parcel of land on Milborough Line. The application, filed early in December, is part of the aggregate company's overall plan to establish a quarry in northeast Flamborough. A separate, but similar application was filed for adjacent lands in September 2004 to permit a large limestone quarry near the corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line.

The recent application, calling for rezoning of the land from agricultural/conservation management to extractive industrial, is needed to provide an entrance and exit driveway for quarry trucks.

While separate from the application filed with Hamilton in 2004, it will be reviewed by city staff in concert with the overall quarry development proposal.

"It will be wrapped up into one application," said Hamilton senior planner Chris Bell, noting that the land is adjacent to the property for the proposed quarry.

St. Marys spokesperson Jennifer Tuck said the Milborough Line property wasn't included in the company's original application. Rezoning is being sought now, "just to provide access to the quarry," she explained, adding that the Millborough Line property has always been featured on maps whenever the quarry footprint has been discussed, such as at haul route or public information meetings hosted by St. Marys.

According to Graham Flint, chair of FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), the property wasn't acquired by the former quarry owner until sometime in 2005.

He said it's his "understanding" that proponents of the plan originally wanted to put the entrance-way along

a provincially significant wetland on the property, but decided to buy neighbouring land so the driveway could be built north of the wetlands.

Opposition

FORCE members showed their opposition to the proposal and the recent application by sending e-mails and letters of concern to the city before Christmas. "We got quite a few e-mails and letters from area residents," Bell confirmed this week.

Residents oppose the proposal on several grounds, including potential health, safety and environmental issues. Many fear that it will negatively affect their drinking water, regardless of whether they get their water from a private well or the groundwater based municipal system in Carlisle.

Flint said the new application should be treated separately from the original, because "the regulatory environment has not stood still" since 2004. More stringent regulations, such as Ontario's Clean Water Act, have been passed since the earlier filing and, as a result, the more recent one should be subject to them, he argued.

While the application will be "coming forward as one report," Bell said staff will look at planning policy framework for all parts of the application.

"We continue to review the overall development proposal," he said.

Commenting on the reaction of residents to the recent development, Flint said, "The community continues to show engagement and involvement in the process."

Besides using part of the Milborough Line property to provide access to the site, St. Marys also plans to use some of the land for noise barriers, as well as for operating a controversial groundwater pumping recirculation system, which company officials say will mitigate the quarry's impacts on local groundwater, a report on the anti-quarry group's website (www.stopthequarry.ca) states.

Tuck said the company will soon decide how to proceed with testing the system after recently being told by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) that it must repeat the first of three tests conducted last July because data from the initial round isn't acceptable. Heavy rains during the test period caused the ministry to question the reliability of the findings.

"We won't be doing any tests in the winter," Tuck said.

Besides awaiting word on the resumption of the pump tests, FORCE members also expect to hear more details about prospective haul routes in the weeks ahead. Flint said St. Marys was to deliver a transportation report to the city in November but has yet to do so. He expects more information on the routes will be revealed soon.



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