

# Lowndes in the hot seat over quarry

BY DON REDMOND

As anticipated, quarry applicant David Lowndes and his staff got a fairly rough ride when the City of Hamilton held a public meeting at Our Lady of Mount Carmel elementary school on April 6.

Lowndes Holding Inc. has an application into City Hall's Planning staff that would see 390 acre quarry established at the northwest corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line, the border of Flamborough and Campbellville.

This was the first public meeting between Lowndes and local residents since the summer of 2004 and the gymnasium was overflowing with a crowd of 500-plus.

Hamilton Senior Planner Stan Holiday opened the meeting by stating it was simply an information meeting to let the public know where the application stood in City Hall at this point and the future hurdles it would face.

What the chief concerns over the application boiled down to at this point, Holiday noted, were "the impact of the intended use on water; the impact of the intended use on traffic."

Steven Rowe, the aggregate planning advisor hired by Hamilton, called the application "very much a work in progress."

However, he expressed concerns that in the hydrogeology report submitted by Lowndes, "there was not enough information supplied. We have lot of questions that need to be answered."

When asked by a resident what the timeline on the completed application was, Rowe said it was a tough thing to estimate because of that very reason, asking the proponent for more information.

"It's really up to the proponent. Studies still have to come back (from Lowndes)," he said. Eventually, he said the fastest timeline would be one year before it lands in front of council but conceded it could be up to five years.

Rowe noted that a hydrogeology report, which planners deemed incomplete, was originally submitted by Lowndes in July 2005 before bring sent back. The city has yet to see the resubmitted report. "(Lowndes) submitted not enough information and he was then supplied with lots of questions (from us)."

However, he also revealed how little power the city has in the long run with regards to a quarry application by acknowledging that the planning level is Hamilton's but little else. Ultimately, the Ministry of the Environment will be the arbiter on issues of water, air and noise while the aggregate component falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

As if to send a cautionary message to the crowd that, in the end, their fight will likely be with the Province, Rowe noted, "the Ministry of Natural Resources has policies and procedures but they're pretty much internal to the Ministry of Natural Resources."

When Lowndes took the mike, he kept it as short as possible, saying that he is "looking to find fair and reasonable solutions to (citizens') concerns." But just as quickly, he passed it over to his environmental engineer Robert Long. As expected, Long got a fairly rough ride from the crowd but steadfastly stuck to

script by noting that there's a "growing shortage of aggregate" in Ontario. He claimed that the Provincial Policy Statement said that extraction is "a legitimate limited use of land."

He added that while the total acreage of the Lowndes' site (Phase 1) was 390, only 170 of that would be quarried. However, he later had to acknowledge that should Phase 2 go through on a property Lowndes to the west of the present site, that number would double and add another 30 years on top of the Phase 1 quarry's 25-30 year lifespan.

Long also said that 90 per cent of the water used by the quarry - anywhere between two to three million gallons a day - would be "recirculated" back into the water table and that Lowndes' staffers would be demonstrating the recirculation process on site this summer for Ministry of the Environment and city officials.

The route quarry trucks would take was also a bone of contention with residents concerned about increased truck traffic though Carlisle and past nearby schools. After first telling the crowd, "I can not tell you where the (truck) route will be," Long eventually relented that his belief was that truck would only travel north and east to get to Highway 401 - the route mapped out was north on Milborough Line, east on Campbellville Road and then north on Guelph Line to the 401. He also added that Lowndes was prepared to pay for an on-ramp being built at Milborough and the 401.

Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy has been a vocal opponent of the quarry since the day in May 2004 when Lowndes, his father and another official showed up in her Waterdown office with a puck-sized piece of compressed aggregate to reveal their application plan. As soon as the mike was hers, she fired up the crowd by saying that even Lowndes' own hydrogeological study was at odds with what the proponent had been saying.

"The applicant has not proven through their own studies that this can be supported," she said. "I don't buy it; you don't buy it; even their own water consultants don't buy it."

However, she noted while most residents in the area would like to see the application scuttled at this point, it had to be processed with due diligence by city staff. If not, the city and residents would only be making Lowndes' case that much stronger at the inevitable Ontario Municipal Board hearing.

"We are going to do this properly. The technological information we've seen tells me this shouldn't be supported," she said, adding that she was confident she had the full backing of Hamilton Council.

As well, should the application be approved at any government level, she said, and the unthinkable happened - water shortages throughout the area - city hands were tied as far as piping water to Carlisle. The Greenbelt Act, while supportive of the aggregate industry, also forbids lake-based water be piped into rural areas, such as Carlisle, Mountsberg and Campbellville. "No amount of compensation (from Lowndes) will help (citizens) then."

Jim Harnum, Hamilton's Director of Water and Wastewater, told the Compass prior

to the meeting that if that happened (the quarry detrimentally affecting the water supply), the city would have to apply to the Province with an emergency request and even if the Province relented on its own Greenbelt water policy, it would take "a year and a half at the very least" to get the water to Carlisle. That was construction time only, not including the time the Province took to make the decision and the mandated construction tendering process with which Hamilton must proceed.

But while McCarthy's message struck the right note with the crowd, the night belonged to Graham Flint, chair of Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE), who came to the mike amidst thunderous applause. "Thank you," he yelled cheerfully, "Now the meeting is ours!"

To the biggest issue, water, Flint presented a map, showing the Lowndes' quarry cutting through the identified area of the Carlisle Wellhead Protection Zone. "Their report said the wellhead will naturally shift to the west" on its own accord, Flint noted, asking if anyone in the room was willing to take that chance. He added that the city-hired peer review hydrogeology firm, Jagger Himms, stated in their report, there was "insufficient information about the propose groundwater recirculation system" to even say if it would be effective.

In actual fact, the report from Jagger Himms went a step further, stating that within

the Lowndes application, "There are notable errors and inconsistencies as well as missing information in the key documents reviewed," something of a recurring theme for the evening.

As to the truck route, Flint said it would be "naïve to believe their truck will be using the 401" with the housing boom in Milton (Derry Road/Thompson Road area).

He continued with overlay after overlay showing the various environmentally protected aspects that the Lowndes property sat on, noting, "the whole area (of the application) is with the Natural Heritage System with the Greenbelt (legislation.) That is the highest protected level."

Like McCarthy, he cautioned the battle would be a long one but the ramifications were significant. "This would be the eighth largest quarry in Canada. This is a huge thing. Our children's children children's children will be dealing with this."

Resident Michelle Ryan, one allotted speaker, noted that, "if you drove around Ontario for days and weeks and months, you couldn't find a worse location for a quarry."

Carlisle resident Everett Dansereau told the Compass that between Lowndes and another water-taking application on 11th Concession Road East by Flamborough Springs water, "this whole area is going to turn into a desert. About the only positive I can even see to this is I'll probably be gone (dead) by the time it all happens."

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