

Town council supports Acton Quarry expansion in principle

Halton Hills Council has provided its support in principle to Dufferin Aggregates' Acton Quarry expansion plans.

Council endorsed the application Monday evening subject to the finalization and acceptance of Dufferin's Adaptive Management Plan, Ecological Enhancement Plan, Aggregate Resources Act Site Plans and Acton Quarry Public Benefits and Environmental Protection Agreement. The recommendation has to be ratified at the next council meeting (June 23) before it is final.

Before making the decision, council members heard from several people on the issue including Brent Clarkson of MHBC Planning on behalf of Dufferin Aggregates.

Clarkson said Dufferin submitted its application for the expansion in 2009 and since then the expansion area had been reduced by 50 per cent in an effort to address comments from the agencies and public. At that time, the extraction area was about 99 hectares, and today it's 49.3 ha.

Clarkson said Dufferin has acquired significant buffer lands to increase distance from the proposed extension and residents.

He also said once the expansion area is operational Dufferin's plan is to restrict the use of Maple Ave. for local deliveries of aggregate only. He estimated that wouldn't occur for five years from now. Both Ward 3 Councillors Moya Johnson and Dave Kentner expressed disappointment it couldn't start immediately.

If the proposed extraction area is approved Clarkson said Dufferin has agreed to convey 436 hectares of land to the Town for public ownership.

Acton resident Norm Elliott urged Council to support the quarry expansion and pointed out several examples of facilities in the community Dufferin has contributed to including; Dufferin Community Centre in Prospect Park, Acton Public Library, Georgetown Hospital and both Georgetown high schools.

Halton Hills resident Chris Rumley spoke against the expansion.

"A bad idea is still a bad idea even when you cut it in half," said Rumley.

She said the quarry's Pit Four will be very

close to Acton and asked if any tests had been done to determine the impact of blasting on historical buildings.

"Isn't it time to simply release Acton from the grip of this industry once and for all," asked Rumley. "Approving the expansion sounds like short-term gain for long-term pain."

Stephen Lister spoke about ongoing well and foundation issues on the Fourth Line, which he attributes to the quarry.

"If you've got an opportunity here to slow this process down and maybe if you have to approve anything do it in very small pieces," Lister said.

Doris Treleaven, president of POWER, said the Niagara Escarpment is a world biosphere reserve, and "we don't understand why quarries still exist on that reserve."

She complained that the Town did not provide adequate notice to the public that the quarry issue was on the agenda that evening.

"Dufferin has donated a lot of money for the Town and there's a big possibility that there's a conflict of interest with some members possibly here with regards to voting on some issues."

She also said POWER has a petition signed by more than 1,000 people opposed to the quarry expansion.

Councillor Bryan Lewis took exception to Treleaven's conflict of interest comment. Lewis said those who had a conflict of interest had stepped aside. He said companies or individuals who donate to the town should be commended "rather than point fingers and say there is a potential conflict of interest."

"To just make a blanket statement is very, very unfair," said Lewis.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said the Town is fortunate there is a Joint Agency Review Team (JART) process in place dealing with the quarry application that can look at the environment and water.

"If there were red flags identified it would have been identified in the report and it would have been here to council," said the Mayor.

The vote was unanimous. Jon Hurst didn't vote as he had declared a pecuniary interest.

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