

Shelter Valley pit meeting draws one hundred and fifty people

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About 150 people crammed into Alnwick-Haldimand's council chambers last Wednesday night to protest the gravel pit proposed for Shelter Valley. When one speaker asked how many were there to support the plan, only one hand went up, and it was quickly withdrawn when the woman realized she'd misunderstood the question.

The mood was generally upbeat, with Mayor Bill Finley calling hecklers to order after only a few outbursts.

Finley said the public meeting, which started at 8 p.m., would go until midnight if necessary. In fact, it wrapped up about 11:30.

"Anybody I've talked to felt we gave them time to express their feelings," Finley told *The Independent* yesterday.

"(But) I think we're looking at beyond the 45 days (the period required to be allowed for comment after a public meeting, which will be up Aug. 23), he said, adding that Shelter Valley Aggregates Ltd., the company proposing the pit, probably does not want to push the matter forward either, at this point.

Alnwick-Haldimand councillors have still not formally discussed the proposal, and Finley said that would be their next step.

The township's planner, Peter Josephs, explained the purpose of the by-law under consideration, which would see the 140-acre property on Turk Rd., owned by local businessman Ben Peters, rezoned from rural to extractive industrial.

tonnes from the pit annually, said James Parkin of MacNaughton Hensen Britton Clarkson Planning Limited (MHBC), who was speaking on behalf of SVA, the Ruthben Holdings company formed to develop the pit.

To date, the planning company has focussed on meeting criteria of the provincial government and various agencies. As indicated by Korotki's report to council, most of these criteria seem to have been met with various studies commissioned by the planner. Design of the site is now underway, Parkin said.

He went through a long list indicating that the extraction operation would have no significant impact on, among other things, groundwater levels, natural heritage or fish habitat. And the property has no significant historic, prehistoric or cultural sites, he said.

"The licensing process is long and complicated, and we are just at the beginning of it," Parkin said, adding that July 21 is the last day to object to the licencing application SVA has submitted to MNR.

About 10 people had questions relating specifically to Parkin's presentation. One woman who asked about the source of the water to be used for dust control on the pit's roads and for washing the aggregate, was told it might be trucked in. "(And) there is a possibility of a future application for water-taking," Parkin admitted.

Cramahe Mayor Jim Williams, Deputy Mayor Lee Dekeyser and Councillor Tim Post were on hand to represent Cramahe residents who will be affected by truck traffic on their roads, Pipeline Road and County Road 25 in particular.

Williams told the crowd that Cramahe Council had passed a resolution opposing the development at their meeting the night before. Although the neighbouring township's council has no say in whether the proposal goes ahead, Williams said yesterday he felt the concerns of res-

idents should not be ignored.

"The safety factor is the main thing," Dekeyser said yesterday. "These roads are not designed to carry these big trucks. Who's going to pay for road upgrades?"

Dekeyser agreed with Mayor Finley that it would be much better to keep negotiating with SVA to try to win concessions, rather than letting the matter go to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) for a decision.

"I would rather work the issue rather than throw our hands up and go to the OMB," Finley said yesterday.

Josephs said the operation would involve digging up sand and gravel, and using a portable processing unit to wash and screen the aggregate. It would not involve concrete batching or asphalt manufacturing.

Although the rezoning is necessary for the proposal to go ahead, the property is designated as "aggregate resource" in the province's official plan, so a gravel pit is a permitted use under the plan.

Clerk/administrator Terry Korotki read the comments from various ministries and agencies, none of which appeared to have serious concerns: Trans Canada Pipelines, which has two high-pressure pipelines bordering the property, requested an additional 30 days to comment, and Trent Hills Conservation had prepared a four-page report detailing its concerns and requirements for adding to the "environmental control zones" on the property.

Korotki noted that up until 4 p.m. that day, the municipality had received 88 letters about the development.

SVA is applying to the Ministry of Natural Resources for a licence to take 500,000

A member of Valley Voices, the group formed last month to fight the proposed pit, said in his presentation that sites like this use hundreds of thousands of litres of water. David Holdsworth, a science professor at the University of Western Ontario in London (who owns the building lot directly across the road from the proposed pit), also pointed out that sound propagation in a valley is very complicated, and it would be difficult to gauge the noise level neighbours would experience.

In answer to questions about his study of sound from the operation, Bruce Johnston of Aercoustics Engineering said there will be noise, but the level of it will fall within MNR guidelines.

Several speakers said the ability to sell property in the area is already being affected by the proposal.

Dianna Richard of Valley Voices spoke for all the children who wait for the bus, and ride their bikes and horses on Shelter Valley Road. She described in detail the bus stops, how many children would be waiting at them along the frequently foggy route, and what the truck drivers would be doing as they drove the fully loaded, potentially 40-tonne vehicles passed these stops.