

Quarry opposition holds strong as crowd packs hall

By Dianne Cornish
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

For the third year in a row, a capacity crowd filled a Flamborough recreation hall to protest a proposal for a quarry near Campbellville.

"That to me was a gift," Graham Flint said following the Wednesday night meeting organized by FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment), a grassroots citizen's group that has opposed the quarry application from the start.

Flint, who chairs FORCE, was impressed by the show of support from area residents three years into the community's battle to quash the quarry plan.

"Despite the fact there hasn't been a lot of movement (on the application), people's resolve remains steadfast," he noted.

Also acknowledged was support coming from political quarters. The crowd of about 190 applauded the efforts of Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy, who has been a strong advocate of FORCE from the beginning. She told residents at the meeting that the City of Hamilton is refilling borehole cuts done on 11th Concession Road East earlier this year by the quarry applicant, St. Mary's CBM.

"The city is filling them and will bill St. Mary's, and after three years, if we're not satisfied, we'll bill them to repave the road," she told the crowd.

A public protest arose in February when residents learned that the aggregate company had drilled 40 boreholes into roads surrounding the proposed quarry site, near Milborough Townline, without obtaining the required permission from the City of Hamilton and Town of Milton. The tests were done to determine the weight-bearing characteristics of the roads as part of St. Mary's haul route study. A company spokesperson said "a miscommunication" had resulted in the drilling being done without permits.

Milton councillors in attendance

Milton councillors Rick Day and Jan Mowbray also attended last week's meeting to show their support for FORCE.

"We want Milton (council) to take a far more active role in this," Day said, adding that he and Mowbray both ran successful re-election campaigns that included a commitment to fight the quarry.

"We're not the host community, but that doesn't mean we don't recognize the dangers to Milton," he said of the quarry's impacts. It's expected that the bulk of the development's haul routes will be along Milton roads.

"It's nice to see this broad range of political support," Flint told the Champion after the meeting.

MPP Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale), while unable to attend the recent meeting, was lauded by Flint for providing "tremendous support" to the group by providing its steering committee members with access to provincial government officials who will eventually be involved in the application process.

Flint speculated that Hamilton, as the host community, will oppose the application for an Official Plan amendment and rezoning from St. Mary's Cement.

"I'm feeling bullish," he told the crowd. "We'll be going arm and arm with the city in opposing this."

But the Province, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, will eventually be asked to grant an aggregate

licence to St. Mary's and opponents to the plan will also need to plead their case at the provincial level, he warned.

FORCE members are convinced the process will end at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). In the meantime, Flint said it's vital that area residents continue to stay engaged. "Don't let this issue fall off the radar," he stressed.

FORCE members have consistently argued that the site is unsuitable for a quarry for many reasons, including the threat to area water wells, the potential impact on environmentally-sensitive areas and natural wetlands on the site and the effects of a quarry on quality of life issues, such as quar-

ry truck traffic, dust and noise pollution.

Late last year, residents bombarded the Ministry of Environment (MOE) with 650 letters of concern over St. Mary's application for a temporary permit to take water (PTTW). The company applied for permission to pump 2.8 million gallons of water a day for 20 days from the site in order to test a water recirculation plan.

"They (ministry officials) are paralyzed with fear," Flint said at the meeting, noting that PTTW applications routinely draw "zero to 20 submissions."

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