

# Georgetown IFP

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## Residents, CRC give resounding no to Hidden Quarry proposal

Halton Hills mayor expresses concern at public meeting



### Protest in song against Hiddenn Quarry

Photo by Melanie Hennessey

*Rockwood business owner Wendi Hunter sings the ballad she wrote to express her concerns on the Hidden Quarry proposal during a public meeting on the topic Tuesday evening. Halton Hills Councillors (from left) Jon Hurst, Moya Johnson and Ted Brown listen.*

Independent Free Press

By [Melanie Hennessey](#)

The Concerned Residents Coalition (CRC) and other area citizens joined forces this week to deliver a resounding message: Just say no to the Hidden Quarry.

The Township of Guelph/Eramosa Council heard this sentiment loud and clear on Tuesday evening at a well-attended public meeting it held to discuss its consultant's planning report that recommends approval in principle of the controversial quarry proposal from James Dick Construction Ltd. (JDCL), subject to detailed conditions.

The JDCL quarry is proposed for 97 acres, situated at the northeast corner of Hwy. 7 and Sixth Line in Guelph-Eramosa Township, 2.5 km west of the Halton Hills boundary. The company is asking to extract 700,000 tonnes of aggregate annually for 15 to 20 years, operating from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Saturday, excluding holidays. The application is heading to the Ontario Municipal Board, with a pre-hearing date set for November 9.

"Ultimately this decision is in the hands of the Ontario Municipal Board, but we will ensure council's opinion is clear before those proceedings begin in November," said Guelph/Eramosa Township Mayor Chris White. "We want to ensure our deliberations consider the concerns of the entire community and that we work through the recommendations and all critical issues."

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**Staying Alive Fitness owner Leanne Monaghan**

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Over 100 residents and local politicians packed the Rockmosa Community Centre and expressed their thoughts through both words and music, with Rockwood business owner Wendi Hunter singing her opposition in a ballad she wrote called *Manmade Thunder*.

Members of the CRC were out in full force and presented detailed information they've gathered via their own experts and hired consultants that support their position against the quarry due to unresolved issues.

"We urge council to take a position that the Hidden Quarry should not be approved," said CRC president Doug Tripp. "A recommendation to approve the quarry, even with conditions, is premature in light of the unresolved issues."

Among the topics they feel haven't been adequately addressed are the quarry's potential impacts on air quality, local agricultural operations, water table drawdown, noise levels, dust, property values, safety for local children and more. Concerns were also raised about potential negative effects of blasting below the water table - an uncommon practice that isn't currently being used in Ontario.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette used the opportunity to once again express the municipality's concerns with JDCL's plans, with the predominant issue being the potential effect the quarry could have on traffic and roads throughout the community. The majority of Halton Hills Council members were also in attendance, along with Town staff.

"To begin with, the planning report states that the benefits of the Hidden Quarry to Halton Region will be around \$2.2 million over 20 years. I think the damage to our roads will far outweigh these numbers," he said. "These so-called benefits are neither here nor there; the real issue is the potential negative impacts from the haul route. This proposal will see a significant increase in truck traffic driving through the community, causing negative impacts with no accountability to local businesses or residents."

Since Halton Region and Town of Halton Hills staff haven't completed their assessments yet about potential negative impacts on the community and how they would be mitigated, Bonnette said he "must respectfully disagree with your planner's conclusions that the development can proceed with minimal impacts."

As an example of negative fallout from the quarry, Bonnette pointed to a business in downtown Acton that recently put its plans for exterior renovations on hold and is now considering selling the property after hearing about the potential quarry traffic.

That business is Staying Alive Fitness, with owner Leanne Monaghan tearfully telling the audience about the hard decision she and her partner now have to make.

"Until we can find out what the impact of this quarry is going to be, we've halted everything," she said. "It would be very sad if, after 10 years of business, we decide to move somewhere else because of this Hidden Quarry. When my partner and I started this business we built it on the premise of healthy people, healthy communities. If this quarry comes through, that's no longer valid."

Speakers throughout the evening were openly critical of the planning report penned by Elizabeth Howson of Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd., with several saying they felt certain issues were overlooked and others expressing their dismay in her recommendation to approve the quarry in principle.

"Liz Howson, I ask how can you put council in this position? When there are so many conditions, why approve it?" asked Rockwood home daycare provider Elizabeth Crha.

She also took the township's council to task, asking if they are prepared to "break the spirit" of the CRC's 1,000+ membership.

"Does the Hidden Quarry fit into your vision of this rustic heritage town? Is this your vision for the residents and business owners of Rockwood and surrounding areas?" she said. "I plead with you to search deep within your beliefs and say no to the Hidden Quarry. Join with us in the battle to save our community."

Otto Felber, who lives near the proposed quarry site, presented pictures of his pristine farmland and spring-fed pond.

"We are deeply concerned about whether we will still have that pond when they start dynamiting in our backyard," he said. "If I lose that spring, I'll have nothing but a mud hole down there instead of a beautiful pond."

And Ridge Road resident Perry Groskopf gave White a present— a large piece of rock weighing over five pounds that he said recently flew off a truck driving through Rockwood.

"Should a truck or heavy vehicle hit this rock on the road, it becomes a hazard— a projectile to kill a child," he said.

On the subject of property values, Tony Russell shared his experience as a former resident living near the Dufferin Aggregates quarry in Acton. He now lives within one kilometre of to the JDCL proposed site.

He said despite making major upgrades to the home in rural Halton Hills, he only managed to increase his property value by 10 per cent over 11 years. During the same time, the consumer price index rose by 35 per cent, he noted.

"We had a real loss of 25 per cent, which translates into \$50,000," he said. "We got out before most of our neighbours, and my beautiful house today is abandoned because nobody wants to live there. As a property owner, I think it's unconscionable for anyone to suggest there will be no impact on property prices."

Leanne Girardi, who lives within metres of the proposed site, expressed similar concerns regarding property values, along with potential negatives impacts on her home from quarry blasting and health from the dust, etc. in the air.

"We will be stuck with our broken home and our sick bodies," she said. "Please don't allow our beautiful community to turn into a mega rock quarry."

Milton Councillor Cindy Lunau was also in attendance and pointed out that while the quarry falls in Guelph/Eramosa Township, its effects will also be felt in Milton, which has a nearby rural boundary in Nassagaweya.

"I can say that we are very concerned about a number of issues that affect the Town and our residents in north Milton," she said. "Water and traffic and air do not respect municipal boundaries."

She added that Milton Council will be addressing the issue at its September 28 meeting.

Milton Regional Councillor Colin Best asked the Milton residents in attendance to raise their hands, with about half of the audience doing so. Best echoed the sentiments expressed by Bonnette and Lunau.

Guelph/Eramosa Township Council will be determining its position on the quarry at its October 7 meeting and is receiving public comments until September 25 on the issue.