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Rockwood quarry report draws big crowd

by Jaime Myslik

ROCKWOOD - Emotions ran high at the Rockmosa Community Centre on Tuesday night as area residents shared their comments about a proposed quarry near Rockwood.

More than 100 people attended the special meeting of council, representing Guelph-Eramosa Township, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton and the Region of Halton, and their main message was residents are not supportive of the "hidden quarry."

Close to 25 speakers shared comments and not one spoke in favour of the township's planning report or the recommendation to the OMB to approve the quarry with conditions.

Speakers were responding to a report presented on Sept. 10 by Elizabeth Howson of Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd, a planning consultant hired by Guelph-Eramosa.

The report recommends the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) approve the James Dick Construction Limited (JDCL) application "in principle, subject to detailed conditions" being met "to the satisfaction of the township in consultation with the Town of Halton Hills and Town of Milton and County of Wellington" as well as other appropriate agencies.

In December of 2012 JDCL applied for a rezoning amendment for lands southeast of Rockwood - from agriculture and hazard land to extractive industrial - to make way for a quarry.

In May of this year JDCL took the application to the OMB, which will now make the final rezoning decision.

However, Guelph-Eramosa council will be making a decision on the township's position at the OMB based on public input, the planning report and input from various stakeholders. Council will state its position at the Oct. 7 council meeting.

Howson stressed the approval recommendation comes with a number of conditions that must be met.

"Every single one of the issues that has been considered gives rise to conditions that need to be met before any development can occur," Howson said.

"There's a range of requirements depending on the nature of the issue but every single one of the issues that have been identified give rise to a condition or conditions that need to be crafted and there's a need to find the appropriate mechanism to ensure that they are properly put in place and legally enforceable."

Howson identified the following as areas where specific conditions must be met for the approval recommendation to go forward: hydrogeology, species at risk, traffic, haul route (matters remain outstanding), noise and blast vibrations, archeology and agriculture.

However, for residents this wasn't reassuring.

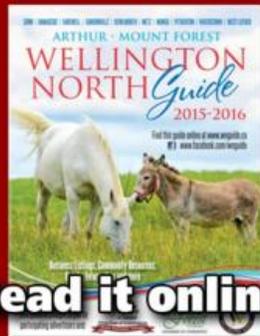
For Guelph-Eramosa resident Bob Storey the agricultural impact study was his main area of



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concern.

"I've lived in this area all my life basically ... we rent four of the adjacent properties around that quarry," he said. "So this thing's going to affect me, I'm afraid, big time."

Storey was looking forward to being able to share his concerns during the agricultural impact study, however he wasn't consulted.

"I recognize that council and the person writing up the report only go with the information they receive but there's a lot of stuff that wasn't in that report that should have been in my opinion," he said.

Storey said a large part of his business involves selling hay to the race horse industry.

"We have actually invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into this business over the last 10 years ... we've got a local business that is doing reasonably well," he said. "But the one thing that's really going to affect it, and I don't know by how much yet, is dust. I've talked to numerous ones of my clients that are trainers ... and they all have told me flat out if they open a bale of hay and it's got quarry dust in it, they'll no longer come to buy anything."

Henrietta Kingshott, who lives close to the proposed site, also voiced concerns about her family and the horses she and her husband raise and train.

"My concern is the immediate threat to the safety of my horses and moreover my family who's driving these horses and if anybody would like to find out what a threat that is you're welcome to come out and try to drive one of them around that track out there when there's a little noise," she said.

She said with the quarry it will be almost impossible to run horses on the track.

In order to provide an adequate review, the township put together a technical review team consisting of R.J. Burnside and Associates, for hydrogeology, natural environment, traffic impact, haul route and air quality; Novus Environment Inc. for noise and blast vibration; Uterman McPhail Associates for cultural heritage; Brook McIlroy Inc. for visual impact and Altus Group Economic Consulting for economic impact. These firms are all considered specialists in their respective areas of review, Howson explained.

She also said the review was made in the context that "As much of the mineral aggregate resources as is realistically possible should be made available as close to the markets as possible."

She added, "It's not sufficient to just say, 'alright there's mineral aggregate it should be taken out,' you have to look at all the impacts and consider what can and can't be done to mitigate them, or if they can't be mitigated then the application will be turned down."

The main question to be addressed in the report was whether the development of the quarry could be done in such a manner that it provides an "appropriate balance between all the goals and objectives of the province and the local community."

The application was reviewed by various stakeholders and other municipalities have initiated their own reviews. The Region of Halton submitted input on the natural environment, hydrogeology and the haul route and the Town of Halton Hills and the Town of Milton were concerned with the haul route.

Mayor of Halton Hills Rick Bonnette was at Tuesday's meeting and presented concerns he had about the impact of the hidden quarry on the town of Halton Hills. The proposed quarry is located 2.5 kilometres from the Halton Hills boundary.

"The planning report states that the benefits of the hidden quarry will be around \$2.2 million over 20 years," he said. "I think the damage to our roads and negative impacts will far outweigh these numbers."

The real area of concern for the town is the damage done to the haul routes.

"The proponent's own traffic impact study indicates 26 two-way truck trips per hour supporting operations 6am to 6pm, Monday through Saturday," he said.

"Ninety-five per cent of the trucks are expected to travel east along Highway 7 through Acton, through Georgetown, through Norval."

A review done on behalf of the Town of Halton Hills of the proponent's traffic impact study showed that the number of truck trips towards Halton Hills is likely underestimated, Bonnette said.

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Highway 7 meeting Aug. 4

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"The additional trucks will represent a 12% increase in truck traffic," he said. He also addressed safety concerns.

"The town's concerns about the hidden quarry are not based on a desire to stop the quarry but to ensure the impacts from the quarry do not negatively impact on the quality of life and natural imperatives of Halton Hills," he said, citing the concerns outlined in the report that are not yet resolved.

"As the review stands, without completed assessments from Halton Hills and Halton Region staff about the potential negative impacts on my community and if or how these impacts may be appropriately mitigated I must respectfully disagree with your planners conclusions that of development can proceed with minimal impacts."

Guelph-Eramosa residents also voiced concerns about the impact of increased traffic.

Resident Mary Cuerrier brought up concern for her son's safety while traveling to school because his bus will travel down the 6th Line and pass the hidden quarry at peak times.

"With the removal of the 6th Line bridge several years ago, the only option for his school bus is to travel out to Highway 7," she said.

She said that she couldn't find any evidence that JDCL is looking out for neighbourhood children in any of the traffic impact studies or haul route assessments, despite the fact the Greg Sweetnam said JDCL was an excellent neighbour in his initial presentation in 2013.

She took issue with the planning report stating that there wasn't sufficient information to identify potential issues along haul routes.

"Those so-called 'potential issues' include my son on his little school bus on the 6th Line, all of the children getting on and off school buses along Highway 7 and any other proposed route, and all of the children in Rockwood and Acton who are walking to and from school during peak trucking hours," she said.

She in conclusion Cuerrier said she objected to the quarry and asked that council do the same.

Resident and local business owner Wendy Hunter also expressed concern surrounding traffic on main street Rockwood.

"I'm concerned that the traffic on Highway 7 will divert some of our customers," she said. "We're struggling small businesses, many small businesses are, the traffic on Highway 7 will divert some of the drive-by customers that we get round Rockwood and we won't have those customers anymore."

The Town of Milton was represented with councillor Cindy Lunau making a presentation, stating the town has yet to pass a resolution on it's position but does have concerns about residents in north Milton.

The Region of Halton was represented by regional and local councillor Colin Best who's ward begins 90 feet from the proposed quarry site.

"We're down wind, down stream and down the road so we're going to be impacted probably more than a lot of your residents," he said.

He said that as far as he's concerned the report doesn't meet the criteria.

"Does it benefit the community or does it burden the community?"

The Concerned Residents Coalition was also well represented at the meeting with presentations reflecting on issues brought to council's attention over the past two years.

In addition, vice-president Perry Groskopf made a statement by presenting a reconstructed rock, that he found on the side of the road in Rockwood, to Guelph-Eramosa Mayor Chris White.

"This is fly rock, not the fly rock Bill Hill talks about from blasting but the fly rock that flies off a truck going up a hill at slow speed," he said. "How does that happen?" The piece of rock was over five pounds. He brought up concern that this could happen with the aggregate coming from the quarry.

Guelph-Eramosa will be stating its position regarding the rezoning application on Oct. 7. The public is encouraged to submit comments in writing to planning associate Kelsey Lang at klang@get.on.ca, township clerk Meaghen Reid at mreid@get.on.ca or to their ward councillor.

September 18, 2015

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