

Residents raise concerns over proposed Limebeer Pit

By Bill Rea

There's opposition, but also indications the proponents of a Caledon village area pit proposal are working with the local residents. Lafarge Canada Inc. is seeking permission to mine material from a 33-hectare pit on the east side of McLaren Road, just south of Charleston Sideroad.

Planning consultant Brian Zeman told a public information meeting Tuesday night that the property, also known as the Limebeer Pit, consists of 40 hectares, although only about 33 of them will be subject to actual extraction. The remainder will consist of setbacks and buffers.

He also said this will be an extension of mining operations. The site is surrounded on three sides by pits. To the east is Green Lake, with properties comprising Green Lake cottagers. Zeman said there have been extensive meetings with representatives of the association.

He also told the meeting the site has been identified as a High Potential Mineral Aggregate Resource Area in Peel Region's Official Plan, and as a Caledon High Potential Mineral Aggregate Resource Area in the Town's Official Plan. That means the property has priority when it comes to possible mining operations, and the current application can be considered and encouraged, subject to policy requirements.

Addressing this proposal, Zeman said no extraction is being proposed under the water table.

He said there are about 5.2 million tonnes of aggregate on the site, but the company is proposing a maximum extraction of one million tonnes per year. He said the operation is not likely to reach that level. The amount of material removed from the ground will be governed by market forces, and he said they are looking at a 10-year operation.

As well, he said this will be a load and haul operation, meaning the material will be removed from the ground at the site and loaded onto trucks. They will then be driven east, along internal roads, to a central processing area near Highway 10. There will be no processing of material near the Green Lake properties, as well as no need for access to the site off McLaren.

Zeman said there are no environmental features within the extraction area. There is a wetland nearby, but proper controls will be in place to protect it. There is also an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) to the north of the site.

The property is not considered a prime agricultural area, and there are no cultural heritage features there either. He added the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has signed off on the proposal.

Efforts have been made to minimize the social impacts from the pit operation. Zeman said the Town has peer reviewed noise, air quality and visual impact studies. He added the noise and air quality work has satisfied Ministry of the Environment standards.

He also said there will be no impacts on residential wells.

Zeman said there have been a number of productive meetings with representatives of the Green Lake association. He added plans for rehabilitating the site have been designed in consultation with the association. Since the property is within the Provincial Greenbelt, those policies will have to be followed.

Former councillor Ian Sinclair had a number of concerns with the application.

They included the fact there has been no definite timeline set for the mining of the site by Lafarge, and there are no rehabilitation plans in place, although he observed it looks like the lands will go from being agricultural to woodland and swamp, meaning it's of no value to the Town.

Sinclair also expressed concern that the level of the water table varies.

He pointed out the company has stated it will manage social and environmental impacts, but pointed out the mining will be about 200 feet from homes, expecting a 'dramatic' impact.

Sinclair wondered if the noise impact studies took into account the peaceful nature of Green Lake.

He also observed that berms are planned to manage the visual impact, and he didn't see how blocking the countryside scenes would prevent impact. He expected the result would be a 'tunnel of berms.'

'I think the berming practice should be stopped,' he added, advocating woodlots along the edge of the pit.

He also said there should be a seven-year limit on extraction.

'Lafarge is a big outfit,' he said. 'They can move a lot of stuff.'

Dave Irwin, a representative of the Green Lakes citizens' group said there have been meetings with Lafarge since 2008, adding several issues have been resolved. There are seven still outstanding. 'We are confident that we can reach a satisfactory conclusion,' he said.

Wendy Turner, who said she's lived in the area about 17 years, was concerned that not all the surrounding residents have been kept

informed of the application, adding it's more than the Green Lake residents who will be impacted. Nancy Jacobi, president of the Green Lake Property Owners' Association, urged councillors to visit the area. ?It's a very, very special place, by any standard,? she said.