

NPFAQ appeal in limbo until COVID-19 restrictions ease



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By Michael Riley Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

This story has been corrected from its original version. Scroll to the end for details.

No Place for a Quarry is continuing on with its appeals process to put a stop to the Freymond Lumber and Fowler Construction quarry proposed for Bay Lake Road. They recently sent out a survey, actively looking for donations and support on their Facebook page and on their website. The deadline to complete the survey and donate money to their cause is June 14.

NPFAQ is asking for the public's help in raising \$50,000 for the appeal on the Hastings county rezoning amendment, and another \$10,000 to pay for the balance of the previous appeal on the aggregate licence. They have enlisted the services of Toronto law firm Gillespie Law. An anonymous donor has also pledged to match 50 per cent of the donations to a maximum of \$30,000. If anyone is interested, they can find the survey on the NPFAQ Facebook page.

NPFAQ is appealing the Class A aggregate licence granted to Freymond Lumber, and a rezoning amendment that allowed Freymond to proceed with the quarry. Catherine van der Oye of NPFAQ provides an update on what has been going on:

?We filed an appeal last year with Faraday Township which was challenged by Faraday because of technicalities. Our appeal was deemed invalid and then the application for rezoning was approved by Hastings County. We have appealed their decision. We do not take this cause lightly and feel it's important to protect our environment, water, clean air, tourism and road safety. Word on the street is that this is a done deal. It's not. The impression is that the town needs more jobs, which they do, but by putting a quarry in, you could lose many, many, more jobs than what would be created. We had an economic impact study done by an expert which backs this up,? she says. Van der Oye stresses that NPFAQ is not opposed to quarries, but are opposed to this one, its location close to Bancroft and its close proximity to permanent homes, cottages, businesses and clean spring fed lakes. She also points out the increase in heavy truck traffic and what that will do to endanger safety and increase road maintenance.

?Then there's the issue of dangerous fly rock. Why would you want this in an area filled with homes and cottages? They also want to blast below the water level?the area is littered with natural springs. There is no concrete evidence that our lakes and wells won't be harmed. Why take the chance?? she says.

From the Freymond Lumber and Fowler Construction perspective, they've been in the process of trying to get the quarry built for nearly 10 years. Freymond Lumber has been in operation on Bay Lake Road since 1946, manufacturing hardwood and softwood lumber harvested from local forests. They also provide forest management services. The Freymond family issued the following statement on the current state of the appeals process.

?We remain enthusiastic about this project but we are disappointed that the process has taken this long. Our family has been working

on this application since 2011 and received support from the County of Hastings, the Township of Faraday and many members of the community. Despite all of the technical reports and independent peer reviews confirming that our application meets all provincial, county and townships requirements No Place for a Quarry continues to oppose our application which necessitates a Local Planning Appeal Tribunal hearing. This is unfortunate since we are following the rules and the County of Hastings official plan specifically contemplates new quarries to locate in this area. Our family remains committed to this application, the local community and would always be willing to meet with No Place for a Quarry in an effort to resolve their concerns while allowing the project to proceed,? they say.

The 2019 rezoning amendment hearing was last summer. Hastings County voted to amend the land use restrictions and enact a bylaw to allow the quarry to be built on the Freymond Lumber site. Councillors voted 10 to three in support of the amendment and resulting bylaw. County Warden Rick Phillips, who voted for the amendment, said after the vote that council heard all the information provided and voted accordingly. One of the dissenting votes, Wollaston Mayor Barb Shaw, thought it was a shame to have the quarry constructed along a North Hastings Scenic Route, and bemoaned the negative effects it would have on local tourism, calling it the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Madeleine Marentette, owner of the award-winning Grail Springs Retreat, was baffled why all their evidence had seemingly been ignored by Hastings County after the amendment meeting in the summer of 2019. Grail Springs is a full-service spa and wellness retreat on Bay Lake road that has been in operation for over 25 years. It brings about 1,600 tourists to the area per year, who spend their tourist dollars locally. According to NPFAQ, Grail Springs' operation would be severely hampered by the quarry if it is allowed to be built. Marentette has the negative experience of being in close proximity to another quarry to prove it. The Spurr Lake Marble quarry operated a couple of kilometres away from her property on Bay Lake Road in 1993 and 1994, until public pressure forced its closure.

No matter how the appeals process goes, Justin Harrow, the director of planning with Hastings County describes the appeals process now as being in limbo due to COVID-19.

?The NPFAQ has made their appeal, so it's kind of sitting, waiting with the LPAT right now, given everything that's going on with the province right now, everything's on hold. So, we don't have any set dates for the hearings or anything like that,? he says.

Harrow says that if the appeal is ultimately successful, that would be it. That would be the end of it. There would be no further appeals process after that. The applicants, Freymond Lumber, could reapply for another plan amendment if they wanted to proceed in that direction.?But until we get some dates, nothing will really change at this point,? he says.

The original version of this story stated that ?NPFAQ has had its own expert reports done that prove their assertions that the quarry would have detrimental effects to the environment, increase safety risk, and decrease property values.? NPFAQ states on its website that it has concerns about the environment, safety and property values, however, the only studies produced by NPFAQ are a noise impact review and an economic impact study. The sentence has been removed. Bancroft This Week regrets the error.