

Public gets first look at proposed quarry



By Nate Smelle

A curious crowd of 150 plus concerned citizens lined up early at the Bancroft Fish and Game Club on Thursday, June 25 in hopes of finding out more about Lou Freymond's proposal to operate an aggregate quarry in the Township of Faraday. Organized by EcoVue Consulting Services Inc., the meeting was the public's first glimpse at the details of the operation.

Rather than presenting the details of the quarry to the entire audience at once, EcoVue chose to provide the information on tables lining the outside of the room. Although there were staff on site to explain the maps, graphs and flipcharts on display, many in attendance became frustrated after not being able to hear the answers to their questions over the noise in the room.

As homeowners on Gaebel Road in one of the neighbourhoods nearest to the proposed quarry, Judy and Larry Edgar have been keeping a close eye on the quarry proposal. They feel the manner in which EcoVue conducted the information session was inadequate.

'People who knew nothing about it went in there not knowing anything but that there was a possible quarry going in,' said Judy.

'How would they even know what questions to ask? We basically had told Lou that we would form our decision after the meeting, but there was no way you could form an opinion after that meeting.'

The Edgars still have a lot of questions about the quarry they need of being answered before they can make a decision about whether or not to support the project.

'The question for me is not whether there is a need for a quarry,' Larry said.

'The real issue is that this country is full of rock so why here? Why right beside town affecting so many residents?'

If approved, the quarry will be located 2.3 kilometres south of Bancroft behind the Freymond Lumber yard on Bay Lake Road. The proposed extraction site is 72 acres in size, stretching westward towards Gaebel Road. As identified in the Environmental Impact Study conducted by certified biologist Robin Craig, the natural forest community that already exists on site is composed of: hard maple 50 per cent, poplar 20 per cent, white birch 10 per cent and white pine 10 per cent. The average age of the stand is 84 to 89-years-old.

It is home to 38 bird species, seven mammals, six butterfly, three dragonfly, three frogs and the blue-spotted salamander. While no endangered or threatened species were found during the on site field investigations, one species-of-concern, the Monarch butterfly was encountered during its fall migration through the site.

Freymond is currently applying for a permit to allow for 400,000 tonnage to be extracted from the quarry each year, however, he does not expect to exceed 100,000 tonnes per year. To put this amount into perspective it was estimated in the report that a quarry producing 400,000 tonnes of aggregate would require 27 trucks traveling in and out of the site each day.

'This has been an industrial area since 1956 and I honestly think that we can continue to do that,' said Freymond.

'We can provide jobs and we are not going to hurt anybody.'

If the markets are doing well he said the quarry will create anywhere from three to five jobs in the community. Freymond thinks a quarry would be good for both business and the community for a number of reasons.

'You've got townships saving money having the product right here close,' he said.

'The Township [of Faraday] gains money from royalties so it's keeping taxes down. Keeping people here in Bancroft working so

they aren't going elsewhere; we are going to have more demand for houses, so our real estate should be worth more. There are so many advantages to having industry in the community.?

Freymond's neighbours to the west of the proposed quarry site, Mary and Dave Mackie disagree. As the owners of 225 acres and Mackie Greenhouse and Farm they are worried the air, water and noise pollution generated by the quarry will tarnish their quality of life.

?We can already hear every log as it goes through their mill; now imagine the noise and dust from all the trucks and heavy machinery they would use in the quarry,? said Dave.

?They told us our well would probably be fine. Well, probably isn't good enough. If we lose our water or it gets contaminated there is no getting it back.?

?We really love it here, but if this quarry goes through it will spoil it for us,? added Mary.

?It's not rocket science. If you take out all of those trees and start blasting, where will all the wildlife go? They have to go somewhere.?

So far Freymond has had the following studies completed in support of the quarry: level 1 and level 2 hydrogeological investigation, environmental impact study, traffic impact study, acoustic assessment report, blast impact analysis and planning justification report by EcoVue.

A Stage 1 archaeological assessment was also completed by Ken Swayze of Kinickinick Heritage Consulting, however his report concluded that a Stage 2 assessment was necessary because ?the summit of the northern ridge [of the site] and the apron of outwash at its base have potential for archaeological material from the Late Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic cultural periods because they would have been in proximity to early postglacial river shores.? Swayze also declared in his review that ?given the nature of the archaeological phenomena, it is possible that deeply buried deposits, or human remains may be disturbed during construction and quarry operation.?

Freymond expects Stage 2 of the Archaeological assessment to be completed sometime in the next couple of months.