

Compass-2/12/09

MNR bounces back St Marys application

BY DON REDMOND

Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy has confirmed that the Ministry of Natural Resources has bounced St Mary's quarry application, deeming it "incomplete."

City of Hamilton staff was told by the MNR on February 9 that the application had been returned to the aggregate giant but at this point, it's unclear exactly how "incomplete" it was.

"We don't know if (the application is) missing five things, 10 things or 50 things at this point. Staff is looking into it now," noted Rita D'Ortenzio, McCarthy's assistant, who was informed by staff of the application's rejection while her boss was in a committee meeting.

The area community was stunned when St. Marys decided to forgo further water recirculation tests and took their application directly to the MNR on January 22. The company is looking to create a quarry at the corner of 11th Concession Road east and Milborough Townline, sparking water and traffic concerns in both Flamborough and Campbellville.

However, McCarthy herself was hoping that the MNR might not be a 'quarry-friendly' as the community thought after contacting an MNR representative in Guelph on February 4.

Knowing that the Ministry of the Environment would be demanding an additional water recirculation tests, McCarthy approached Diane Schwier in the Guelph office and asked pointblank how 'complete' an application had to be.

Schwier responded that, "I have never reviewed an application and not found something that either required clarification or needed to be amended slightly. The checklist for the site plans alone has 79 items that must be addressed."

Despite that lengthy checklist and her own 'gut feeling' that St Marys' application wasn't even close to complete, McCarthy told the Compass: "I am working on the technical information to present a Notice of Motion for next weeks Council meeting that states the City of Hamilton's renders the St. Marys' quarry application to the Ministry of Natural Resources as incomplete given all outstanding issues."

As well, she noted that the hydro-geologist hired by the City to review the application "will be providing his written results as to the latest Ministry of Environment's regulations and how he feels St. Marys can not possible prove their 'theory' on Water Recirculation."

That said, McCarthy still expressed some distrust that the MNR might be too easy on quarry applications so she had instructed City lawyers to gather information and see what the ministry deems incomplete.

Her inquiry to Schwier also revealed that no one in the MNR kept any sort of statistics on how many quarry applications have been refused by the ministry over the years.

"I am trying to determine what their track record is on approvals. I am (worried) they are all approved. If this is the case, I need the statistics to expose this."