

Quarry PIC on Jan. 9

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Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy appealed to area residents last week to continue to "stay engaged in the process" designed to select haul routes for the proposed St. Marys quarry in northeast Flamborough.

The local councillor was reacting to a recent message on the FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) website that acknowledges the frustration of residents in what they see as a one-sided process which focuses feedback on St. Marys' preferences. The message also conveys empathy for residents who might be questioning whether they should continue to take part in all company-hosted public information meetings, the third of which is slated for January 9 at the Carlisle Arena.

While she said she, too, understands the frustration of residents, McCarthy insisted, "It's critical for residents to stay engaged in the process and show and expose this as an inappropriate site for a quarry."

St. Marys wants to establish a quarry at 11th Concession Road East and the Milborough Line, the boundary that separates Flamborough and Milton. FORCE, a grassroots citizen's group, has been fighting the proposal for the past three years and its members have turned out in great numbers at several public meetings since the application for the proposed quarry was filed. About 250 people packed the Carlisle Golf & Country Club on November 29 for the second of four meetings intended to update the public about proposed haul routes and garner feedback.

Despite the tight time frame (less than six weeks) between the meetings, McCarthy said "full and strong participation from all concerned area residents" is crucial. "It is even more important (at this stage) that we make our concerns known in terms of a large turnout," she added.

She's thrilled about a recent offer of support from Ignat Kaneff, chairman and CAO of the Kaneff Group of Companies and owner of the Carlisle Golf & Country Club. Kaneff has owned the Carlisle property for 19 years and is "quite concerned" about the proposed quarry, McCarthy said. He has expressed interest in attending the January meeting, she added.

FORCE chair Graham Flint said he agrees with McCarthy that large numbers are always desirable, but he qualified his comments, acknowledging that some people in the community find it very stressful to attend every meeting. The anti-quarry group respects that, he said.

Stressing that FORCE is "by no means trying to orchestrate a boycott" of the January meeting, Flint said the group simply wants to assure those families for whom "this has become a burden and hardship" that, if they choose not to attend, they will be represented by members of the anti-quarry group.

"Margaret (McCarthy) and we are on the same page," he said. "It's important for the community to continue to participate, but we also feel that the community should be able to take a break from this."

Noting that it is difficult to stay engaged in a process that is both "one-sided and unbalanced," Flint said residents have shown their opposition time and time again by turning out in large numbers to protest the quarry proposal. "We don't feel it's necessary to bring out big numbers every single time."

McCarthy, however, insists that only sustained active, local opposition will succeed in defeating the quarry plan.

She thanked local residents for their support in fighting the application but urged them to continue to show their opposition by attending future public meetings.

Even if residents attend the January meeting just to tell St. Marys officials that they don't think there was sufficient time between the meetings for community comments to be fully considered, it's worth taking the time to attend, McCarthy said. "I've never seen success through the process of absence."

The format of the upcoming meeting may end up being the determining factor in terms of opportunities for mass participation. The session is being held at a smaller venue, the Carlisle Arena, and the public notice warns, "the facility has a limited capacity."

It will take the form of an interactive workshop designed to allow the public to provide input on the alternative haul routes and the evaluation criteria.

Participants are being asked to pre-register by January 4 to ensure that adequate space and workbooks are available. Those wanting to participate can contact the aggregate company by e-mail at communityinfo@stmaryscbm.com or through the St. Marys community phone line at 1-866-602-0080. The January 9 workshop will run from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

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