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Melancthon Against Quarries holds public meeting on application to quarry below water table

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Concerned Melancthon residents are coming together to protest a proposed application by local aggregate company, Strada Aggregate, to quarry below the water table.

Melancthon Against Quarries, an independent group opposing the expansion of gravel mining, hosted a community town hall meeting on Sunday (March 2) from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Horning's Mills Community Hall, located at 14 Mill Street in Melancthon.

?We believe that the quarry will be a disaster for our community. If it's going to be stopped, it's going to require a big community effort so our idea is to mobilize the community to reject the whole idea of having a giant quarry in tiny Melancthon,? said Larry Taman, organizer of Melancthon Against Quarries.

During the meeting, Melancthon Against Quarries provided residents with information on aggregate quarries, potential environmental factors and the group's plans to approach protesting the quarry application by Strada Aggregate.

In attendance at the event were other advocacy groups including the Forks of the Credit Preservation Group from Caledon and the Reform Gravel Mining Coalition as well as representatives from Melancthon Council.

?Aggregate is an important issue anywhere you go, but its specifically important here, where we have prime agricultural land, where we have access to really clean, superior water and that water is not far underneath the ground,? said Melancthon Mayor Darren White. ?Our areas, supplies water to communities all around us, and it's important that we be on top of issues like this.?

Some of the concerns raised by community members during the meeting included air quality, natural environment, endangered species, and damage to the water table.

?A below the water table, blast quarry, as you can imagine, is a terrible toxic feature of a rural community. It takes us from being a farming community, a rural community and a solid community to a mining community,? said Taman. ?Once this is approved, if it is approved, it will spread because there's a valuable resource under the water table. I think you can count on more applications coming; we're already pretty much back to the beginnings of the mega quarry.?

One of the biggest pieces of evidence raised by Melancthon Against Quarries in their quest to protest the local quarry is a 2023 report by the Auditor General on the management of aggregate resources.

According to the report, the Ministry of Natural Resources has not provided the public with complete and accurate information on the supply and demand for aggregates, which has contributed to opposition to proposals for new or expanded pits and quarries.

The report also notes a study from 2016 which estimated that the Greater Golden Horseshoe region had reserves of 3,337 million tonnes of unextracted aggregates in licensed pits and quarries and an annual demand of 11 million tonnes.

?If you have supply, why does anybody want to build this quarry in Melancthon. That's the question the people who are proposing it have to explain or have answers to,? said Taman. ?We're very clear that it's not necessary.?

Strada Aggregates (Strada) has been operating as an existing 360-acre above-water sand and gravel pit in the area of 4th Line and

County Rd. 17 in the Township of Melancthon since 2004.

Strada initially brought forward a presentation to Melancthon Council in October of 2021, which noted their intention to submit an application for a proposed quarry.

Strada has initiated undertaking the field work and technical studies required to determine the feasibility of developing a quarry that would extract and process consolidated dolostone bedrock below the water table within the same footprint of the existing pit.

According to Strada Aggregates, the proposed quarry is being designed to ship 2,000,000 tonnes per year from the site and will continue to use the existing entrance/exits and existing haul route.

Mayor White told the Free Press that Melancthon Council's decision on the quarry will be ?fact based? and will ?work with the science?.

?We will work with the science, a lot of which is yet to be determined,? said White. ?I suspect that we will file an object, if for no other reason to allow for the science to be further looked at.?

Taman concluded that the next steps in opposing the quarry will wait until Strada Aggregate has submitted its completed application to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Once the application has been submitted, a notice will be posted giving the public 60 days to respond with letters opposing the application.

?For us, it's important to get a very robust public response, but they don't give us very much time to do it. Part of our purpose is to make sure that people have an idea and understand that the next thing they might be asked to do is write a letter opposing the quarry on whatever basis they oppose it,? said Taman.