

The County Press  
**OPINION**

**EDITORIAL**
**Zoning changes might halt new gravel mine**

From one end of Dryden Road to the other there is mounting concern by area residents and public officials in Metamora and Dryden townships that there may be a menace on the horizon that could drive down property values and diminish the peaceful quality of life currently experienced from M-24 to Van Dyke.

The menace that may disrupt life as we know it along the Dryden Road corridor could come in the form of dozens and dozens of noisy, slow-moving gravel haulers per day for the next 30 years.

The Levy Company and the Boy Scouts of America have submitted a conditional special land use permit with Metamora Township officials to mine sand and gravel from a 500-acre parcel on the Boy Scout property to be used in new road and building construction in southeast Michigan.

While Lapeer County residents want better roads and an improved economy marked by new building construction like anyone else, few are enthusiastic about having a key component to such work in their backyard or else down the road from them. Nowhere is that more important right now than in the communities of Metamora and Dryden that will realize upwards of 60 gravel trains per day from a proposed gravel mine in Metamora Township rumbling through town on their way to M-24 or Van Dyke, from where the trucks will travel south through Almont.

We can't help but point out the irony in a proposal to mine gravel to repair and rebuild Michigan roads, only to have our roads here in Lapeer County beat up and prematurely pulverized by a constant stream of 50-ton gravel trains. Who will rebuild Dryden Road, M-24 and Van Dyke after 30 years of heavy truck traffic on them?

The Levy Company and the Boy Scouts are adamant the local soil, rich in natural resources essential to road building and industry, meets the "need" threshold they must demonstrate to gain approval to mine here, but with all due respect they don't live here. If the permit is approved Levy corporate types far from here won't have to wipe dust from their eyes as they dine from outdoor decks at restaurants on High Street in Metamora, or else from their front porches have to listen to semi-trucks chugging up the many rolling hills along Dryden Road. Empty trucks on the way to the gravel mine will be just as noisy, if not more so, because they will clang and rattle with every bump and pothole they hit along the way. Just ask the residents along Oak Street in Metamora that previously had to endure the gravel trucks on their way to and from a pit on Sutton Road.

Kudos to Metamora Township officials who have brought in one of the state's big legal guns when it comes to understanding and mounting challenges to prevent gravel mines from destroying rural communities. Attorney Gerry Fisher was on hand Monday for a joint meeting of the Metamora Township Board and its planning commission for what will likely be many more public meetings to offer advice and counsel to local officials and the residents they work for.

By drafting and amending zoning ordinances with provisions that protect the integrity of historical buildings and the interests of neighbors to the proposed gravel mine or those who live along Dryden Road, the bar could be raised forcing the Levy Company and the Boy Scouts of American to demonstrate why they need to mine gravel from Metamora Township and nowhere else in the region will do.

After all, the call to build better roads and bridges for which we've all been clamoring for years here in Michigan shouldn't have to come at the expense of residents and business owners whose places may become less desirable as the result of double-bottom gravel haulers passing by their places all day long for the next 30 years.

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