

The County Press

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EDITORIAL

Rough road ahead for gravel mine bid

Many residents in the quaint and normally quiet village of Metamora and surrounding area are in an uproar about pending plans by an international aggregate company to mine gravel from the D-bar-A Boy Scout Ranch. The resulting timber clearcutting and mining would result in dozens of loud and dirty double-bottom gravel trains and logging trucks rolling through the village every day, or on eastbound Dryden Road enroute to Van Dyke.

On Monday nearly 60 concerned residents packed a Metamora Township Board meeting to voice their discontent about a recently announced application by the Edward Levy Company and the Boy Scouts of America to mine gravel for up to 30 years on nearly 500 acres of the sprawling and picturesque Boy Scout ranch.

Local officials have no intention of letting their community become overrun by noisy gravel trucks that would kick up dust on the diners enjoying a meal on the outdoor patios of White Horse Inn and High Street Eatery, both located near the intersection of High (Dryden Road) and Oak streets in the heart of the village. These business owners and others in the community have spent a lot of money and sweat equity as they staked their claims on the future of Metamora — all of which could be jeopardized by the proposed large-scale gravel mining project located just east of town.

Only last year many of the same residents in the vicinity dodged a bullet when the ET Rover Pipeline Co. changed its mind about a natural gas pipeline route that would have carved a pathway through the beautiful countryside like a hot knife through butter. Now the same peace and tranquility is threatened all over again by two more outside organizations that stand to make a lot of money in our community with little regard to the community that's only just now getting back on its feet after the Great Recession.

Kudos to the township board that Monday took the advice of their legal counsel, hometown attorney Mike Nolan, to approve a four-month moratorium on any new gravel mining in Metamora Township while officials prepare themselves for what could be a long and expensive appeal to the project.

Wasting no time, Nolan and the township hired one of the state's most highly-regarded attorneys with regards to understanding zoning and master plans as it relates to gravel mining disputes. Gerry Fisher has been retained to assist Nolan in preparing documentation and legal briefs in an attempt to block or at least restrict Levy's ambitions to haul tons of gravel and dirt through the village and township of Metamora every day. The Village of Dryden and the East Dryden Road corridor to M-53 and south through Almont ought to be concerned about the proposed gravel mine operation as well because the same degree of unrelenting truck traffic could be headed their way.

The Metamora Township Board and its planning commission will hold a joint meeting at 7 p.m. Jan. 11 at the township hall in a proactive move to bring everyone up to speed as their lawyers prepare recommendations to fight the gravel mine application.

Like we did as a community when the ET Rover Pipeline proposal threatened the tranquility of four townships south of I-69, area citizens and township officials have an opportunity to again organize a grass-roots campaign to thwart plans that have the potential to disturb the peace along Dryden Road for 30 years into the future.

It's also puzzling that an organization like the Boy Scouts of America that claims to celebrate the great outdoors would agree to carve up and turn hundreds of acres of its property into a lunar landscape of gravel piles and pits until, and if, the land is reclaimed and restored after they reap their financial gain.

The motto of the Boy Scouts is to "Be Prepared." Its slogan is "Do a Good Turn Daily." We hope the Scouts are prepared for the backlash and anguish their gravel mine application has stirred in their backyard and will think long and hard whether to diminish the quality of life around the Metamora Township ranch or whether there is really a short-term financial gain.