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Underground mining plan draws protests

Residents object to potential blasting vibrations, dust and noise

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ANDERSON TWP. - Martin Marietta Materials Inc. wants to build an underground limestone mining operation on a 518-acre site in Anderson Township that would involve blasting 400 to 800 feet below the ground surface.

The company applied this week for a conditional-use permit and variances that would allow the establishment of the deep-mining operation.

Some residents who live near the site have hired Cincinnati attorney Tim Mara to try to stop the deep-mining operation. They have formed a group called CABOOM (Citizens Against the Blasting On Our Miami).

Mara said residents' concerns include safety, noise, traffic and dust.

"Their concerns are well-founded," he said. "Vibrations from the blasting will be felt up to a half-mile away."

Melissa Newman, a resident on YMCA Drive, said she's worried about the blasting.

"It's too dangerous," she said. "It's peaceful and quiet down here. I'm definitely going to fight it."

But Anderson Township Trustee Al Peter said the explosions will occur so far underground that no one aboveground will notice them.

"We don't have any concerns about safety," Peter said.

He also said the mining operation will be set up so that it won't cause traffic, noise or dust problems.

The Anderson Township Board of Zoning Appeals will consider Martin Marietta Materials' request for a conditional-use permit at its Aug. 7 meeting at 5:30 p.m., at the Anderson Center, 7850 Five Mile Road.

The board's decision will be final. Anyone who wants to try to overturn the decision would have to file a lawsuit in Hamilton County Common Pleas Court.

The surface of the site could be used for light industrial development, offices, research facilities or warehouses, Peter said.

The site would then be generating revenue for the township from above ground, as well as below ground.

"It would be a win-win situation for the township," he said.

It would be one of the first underground mining operations in Ohio with coordinated surface development, wrote Steve Raffensperger, vice president and general manager of Martin Marietta Materials' Ohio Division, in a letter this week to Kevin Osterfeld, chairman of the Anderson Township Board of Zoning Appeals.

Raffensperger, whose office is in Mason, was unavailable for comment Friday. Richard Brahm, an attorney for the company, also was unavailable for comment.

Dravo Basic Materials had previously mined the surface of this site.

Martin Marietta Materials' conditional-use application described its proposed deep-mining operation:

The underground limestone mine would be on the north and south sides of Broadwell Road, with an above-ground processing operation on the north side.

The two locations would be connected by an underground tunnel crossing beneath Broadwell Road. No blasting would be necessary to build the tunnel.

The application says licensed blasters would handle the explosives according to federal and state laws.

The company needs to mine deep underground to obtain high-quality limestone used in power plants' air-quality scrubbers.

Martin Marietta Materials has been talking with Anderson Township about an underground limestone mine off and on for about 10 years, said Township Administrator Henry Dolive.

A planned road connecting Ohio 32 to Broadwell, he said, would eliminate a lot of truck traffic on Roundbottom Road and improve transportation for all businesses in the industrial district in that area.
