



July 14, 2010

Commission to hear mine debate July 26

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Hamilton County commissioners won't decide on a proposal by Commissioner David Pepper to de-rail plans for an underground limestone mine in Anderson Township until they hear from both sides later this month.

It was clear at Wednesday's county commission meeting that neither Commission President Todd Portune nor Commissioner Greg Hartmann were ready to sign on to Pepper's resolution to deny Martin Marietta Materials Inc. permission to build two tunnels under Broadwell Road, which the county owns.

"I certainly wouldn't call for a vote today," said Pepper, suggesting that the commissioners discuss his resolution at their next regularly scheduled staff meeting, which will be held at 9:30 a.m. Monday, July 26.

Commissioners agreed that opponents and proponents of the limestone mine near the village of Newtown would be invited to the meeting to present their views.

Under state law, companies that want to excavate under a county road must get the approval of the county commissioners. So far, Martin Marietta hasn't asked for that permission.

Company officials have said that if they are denied permission to build tunnels under the road, they would explore other ways to run the mining operation. That would mean the company would have to go back to the Anderson Township Board of Zoning Appeals for approval.

Pepper, who is running for state auditor this year, rolled out his proposal Tuesday at a press conference at the Newtown Farm Market, which is next door to the proposed mine's location. He was surrounded by people who fought the mine for the past two years.

Many area residents and business owners protested the plan to put an underground limestone mine on the 480-acre site, saying it would increase noise, traffic and dust in the community.

But the township zoning board approved the plan last month by a vote of 3-2. Opponents are appealing the decision.
