



Anderson to proposed mine: NIMBY

ANDERSON TWP. - Many more questions will need to be asked and answered before Anderson Township zoning officials decide whether to allow a proposed underground limestone mine to be built.

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Martin Marietta Materials Inc., which wants to build the mine at a 480-acre site at Broadwell and Round Bottom roads in Newtown, recently finished reviewing a list of questions from the Anderson Township Board of Zoning Appeals.

Martin Marietta will answer these questions at a July 23 hearing before the zoning board. The company told the zoning board that some of the questions can be answered by referring to previous testimony, while others will require more testimony, said Paul Drury Jr., Anderson Township's assistant director of development services.

This opportunity for the company to offer rebuttal testimony is one of the last phases of a public hearing process that began last August.

The zoning board is considering Martin Marietta's request for a conditional-use permit for underground mining and variances that would allow the use and underground storage of explosives on the site. The mining operation would require almost daily blasting 400 to 800 feet below the ground surface.

Some Anderson residents and many neighboring communities have objected to the underground mine. They say the mine would have a negative impact on people's health, air, water, safety and the Little Miami River.

Martin Marietta officials have said the mine would be safe and cause no significant problems.

Richard Brahm, an attorney for Martin Marietta Materials, said if the questions require testimony from expert witnesses outside Martin Marietta, more time may be needed for the rebuttal process.

"If it's an issue that hasn't come up before and requires an expert response, we may have to get an expert to conduct tests before offering testimony," he said.

Drury said he expects closing arguments in this case to take place in September.

Last week, two Hamilton County commissioners added their voices to the large chorus of opponents of the proposed mine.

Commissioners David Pepper and Greg Hartmann voted for a resolution opposing the mining operation. Commissioner Todd Portune abstained from the vote because he thought more research was needed.

The county's resolution won't have any effect on whether the mine is approved, but puts the county on record as opposing it.

Pepper drafted a motion opposing the mining because of the problems it would cause in the area and because all the communities near the site have also opposed the mine.

"The cost far outweighs the potential economic benefit," Pepper said.

Terrace Park, Newtown, Indian Hill, Mariemont, Columbia Township, Union Township and the Mariemont and Milford school districts have passed resolutions opposing the mine.

Commissioner Todd Portune, though, said commissioners have not been a part of the lengthy public hearing process and have not listened to testimony. Portune called a motion opposing the mine without further research "meaningless."

"I have no problem with us weighing in on this," Portune said. "But if we're going to weigh in, we need to do it in the right way."

He offered an alternate motion that would call commissioners' opposition a "personal opinion." Hartmann and Pepper declined to take up the motion.

Pepper, who is running for Ohio Auditor and recently moved to Anderson Township, said he did his homework on the issue before presenting his motion and was confident in proceeding with the vote.

Brahm told commissioners he thinks it is "inappropriate" for them to make recommendations on how Anderson Township's zoning board should vote.