

Hernando County Planning Office

Subject: CEMEX CPAM 1102; Application for Comprehensive Land Use Plan Amendment

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a resident of Citrus County and neighbor of a limestone mine. Despite my dislocation from the project and/or land use amendment under consideration I have long term experience with mining by virtue of the location of my home.

Slightly more than 3,000 feet to my south is a limestone quarry operated by Cemex. It is known as the Cemex Inglis Quarry by roadside signage and many other names by neighbors weary of the several decades of contentions that have arisen due to the mine's proximity to residential properties. In times past, and under different management, activities were sufficiently obnoxious that several legal battles were waged by residents, this despite the 3000' setback from residential properties required by county code. Ultimately the operator's blasting permit was revoked.

During the Cemex era at this site homeowners were visited by routine seismic shocks one or two times per week up to the onset of the recession in late 2007. The standards applied by the State Fire Marshal's office were developed by the U.S. Bureau of Mines, a now defunct bureaucracy that lives on through standards which do little to mitigate nuisance factors. During the course of each day residents were greeted with heavy equipment noises before dawn. This included loud vehicle exhaust, tailgate slamming and aural backup alarms.

During discussions with FDEP Bureau of Mine Reclamation regarding an application to expand the mine in 2005, it was brought to their attention this mine was located on an island, a fact that had not previously been examined by the Department or the Southwest Florida Water Management District. In fact, the FDEP did not believe at first that this was the case. The point of the dialog went to water supply for local residents who were totally dependent upon private wells in a location with a very thin surficial aquifer that had been cut off from the mainland due to the creation of the Cross Florida Barge Canal. The mine was located on the island's highest potentiometric elevation. The application for expansion was ultimately withdrawn. Subsequent review for water use permit renewal resulted in a reduction of allocation for the mine in the range of 90%. Future expansion of the mine was prohibited to the north and east of the current mine pit as a condition of permit renewal.

My point here is that despite the best intentions of regulators and local jurisdictional authority, humans are involved and errors occur from time to time. The review process at hand is likely to lead to another error should the Board vote to approve the application without being fully informed.

Presumably the information above will be taken as anecdotal input. With that said, what cannot be ignored is the fact that mining is an activity of heavy industrial nature. It is

obnoxious and incompatible with adjacent residential development for many reasons. Because of its nature it depreciates the value of adjacent residential properties and that has an adverse impact on property tax revenues. The degree to which this will occur in this instance is unknown. It must therefore be concluded the county will be making an uninformed decision on the final disposition of the matter.

It is the nature of the mining industry in Florida to take a local resource for regional distribution. Framed another way, it is an activity that may benefit the region, but the resultant burden falls on the local community. It is a win/lose circumstance. The County Commission will choose the winners and losers in this matter, be they constituents or the applicant. The Board is under no obligation whatsoever to approve the application.

Should the Board elect to approve the application, it should consider the near and long term consequences of such action. It will have burdened nearby residents who live in close proximity to obnoxious activities that will disrupt their desire and reasonable expectation to live a peaceful existence. This circumstance will most certainly diminish the collective value of their residential and business properties and thus constrain the county's tax revenue. In response, the county commission may be deem it appropriate to raise millage rates to compensate for this loss. Should this occur it is reasonable to conclude the Board is quietly subsidizing the applicant's activities at the expense of its constituents.

Should the Commission elect to not increase millage rates to compensate for this revenue loss, its ability and primary responsibility to act in behalf of county residents to maintain the Health, Safety and Welfare will be degraded.

It may be argued that loss of revenue from adjacent properties will be offset by revenues from the mine. Probably not, but the argument can and likely will be made. The question posed at this point is what will the residual tax valuation of the mine property be when the mine is exhausted in 20 or so years. If assistance is needed to answer this question, look to other jurisdictions that have traveled this same path.

The Board is strongly urged to deny this application due to insufficient information upon which to make an informed decision. The Board may, if it pleases, retain professional assistance in the form of a comprehensive economic evaluation. It cannot otherwise make an informed decision with the information at hand.

Respectfully Submitted,

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