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NC company eyes Clover property for quarry site

BY JIE JENNY ZOU
 jzou@heraldonline.com May 24, 2014 Updated 5 hours ago



CLOVER — A 200-acre swath near Clover may become the site of a granite mining operation if county and state officials approve.

Martin Marietta Materials of North Carolina, one of the country's largest producers of construction materials, confirmed it is looking to develop a granite-rich area north of Clover near U.S. 321 and S.C. 557 into a quarry.

The company has a mine in southern Rock Hill on Hawkfield Road and another in Kings Mountain, just across the North Carolina line.

Overall, the company operates several hundred mines nationally, according to Martin Marietta Materials staff.

But the site proposed for the Clover area faces several administrative hurdles with county and state officials. The company also faces opposition from nearby residents, who cite environmental concerns such as private well contamination, noise pollution, and other property issues.

In order for the quarry to become operational, developers will have to pass what Steve Allen, York County planner services manager, calls a "three-legged stool."

As early as June, the company will ask county council to rezone one area of the proposed site. The county's Zoning Board of Appeals also will be asked for a special exception to allow for the mine, and the state Department of Health and Environmental Control must issue a permit.

South Carolina has more than 560 active mines that involve a variety of operations, including open pit mining, which would most likely be used at the Clover granite quarry, according to DHEC.

Sand and clay mines represent the majority of state mines and are concentrated in areas with the most rapid growth. Aggregate mines, such as those for granite, are located near fall lines.

Paxton Badham, vice president of environmental services and natural resources for Martin Marietta, said it's "no secret" the company is looking to rezone 43 acres on Ridge Road from residential to agricultural use to allow for the quarry. The parcel is one of at least five the company has acquired in the area.

"This is a great opportunity," said Badham, pointing to the area's "unique" granite outcropping, essentially an exposed slab of rock that wouldn't require much digging. "It certainly does lend itself to quarrying."

Badham said the site's large size will make noise pollution a "non-issue" and that the company will

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offer written guarantees to residents ensuring their wells will be fixed if any contamination occurs. He said granite's dense nature greatly reduces the potential for contamination.

"We may look to add more later on," Badham added, noting that the site itself wouldn't open for several years.

In addition to an agricultural rezoning, a special exception is needed because quarries are not one of the uses allowed under the county's agricultural designation. The granite extracted from the site would be used on construction projects such as roadways, Badham said.

Opposition to the proposed mine started when residents learned about the company's plans earlier this month. One couple has led the charge by coordinating with other residents to distribute hundreds of flyers to area residents. The flyers urge residents to "stand together" and "oppose this intrusion into our community."

Nadara Andrews, who has lived on Green Pond Road for more than 30 years, said she doesn't want industry in her neighborhood.

Andrews believes the site will create environmental and safety problems that will contribute to a decline in the quality of life of the mainly residential area.

"All that blasting and holes and everything; after they have finished, they move out, they take the money with them and we're left with the damage," said Andrews.

The region currently does not have access to a municipal water supply and relies on private wells. Other areas of Clover receive water from Gastonia, N.C.

Councilman Bruce Henderson, who represents the area, said he is keeping an "open mind" and urges the company to deliver a detailed public presentation "sooner rather than later."

"I'm not all out, I'm not all in," he said of the quarry. Henderson called the rezoning a "property rights issue" that affects stakeholders on all sides of the issue.

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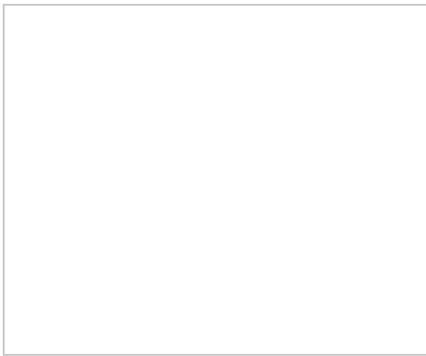
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