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Community section

Queenston limestone quarry tapped out

Q&A session hosted Tuesday to talk about what comes next- golf course and subdivision

The Queenston Quarry has just about run out of limestone and developers are beginning to plan for its rehabilitation, with input from neighbours.

Quarrying began along the top of the escarpment bordering on what is now Bevan Heights in the 1800s. There is still a possibility for it to continue on a small scale, but Lafarge, the current owners of the property and the most recent company to quarry, is not interested in the small amount of stone left, says Frank Racioppo of the Queenston Quarry Reclamations Company.

A Niagara-on-the-Lake resident who came to town to set up the Royal Niagara Golf Course for Kaneff, Racioppo, with Boris Danoff, plans to purchase the 248-acre quarry and develop it.

Their plans include a golf course and a club house, a residential subdivision and other open space uses that they say they are not ready to talk about now, although walking and cycling trails, vineyards and horseback riding could be part of their plans.

About 40 acres of the quarry fall within the urban boundary of St. Davids and are already considered residential in the town's Official Plan, says Racioppo.

A 90-acre portion on the brow of the escarpment, a "sensitive natural heritage feature" that includes Bruce Trail, under public ownership and controlled by the Niagara Escarpment Commission, will not be altered, he says.

The province, when granting the current license to quarry in St. Davids in the late 1980s, accepted a plan to convert the property to a golf course when the operation is complete, he says. Golfing is one of the acceptable and potentially viable uses of a quarry, since the physical challenges of rehabilitation, which will run into "many millions of dollars to execute," include new soil over the exposed quarry with grass and other ecological features- work you would undertake for a golf course, he says.

Residents of St. Davids and Queenston are invited to an open house at the quarry this Tuesday, Oct.16, with company introductions and a tour of the quarry beginning at 4 p.m., and a question and answer period beginning at 6 p.m.

In addition to the continuation of the quarry operation, says Racioppo, Lafarge could also continue to use the property for industrial waste disposal, but by working with the reclamation company, has shown its preference to seeing the end of industrial use and the beginning of its rehabilitation, he says.

Racioppo, a real estate lawyer and developer, and his partner are committed to buying the brownfield and developing it, but would like input from the neighbouring communities, he said.

The approvals required from the town and the Niagara Escarpment Commission are likely take at least another year, he said, and while there are several golf courses in the area already competing with each other, the added benefits he will be able to offer in the location at the top of the escarpment, at a significant national site, bordering a residential neighbourhood and with the other amenities that are part of the plan, "you can catapult that into a very successful project," he said.

"If successfully master-planned you have a project that can't be repeated."

The Meeting will be held under a tent at the entrance to the quarry from Niagara Townline Road and Stanley Avenue, but in the event of bad weather, it will moved to the St. Davids Lions Club on York Road.