

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Pullman Planning Commission Meeting

Date: 07/26/23

Observer Reporting: Jessica D. Cassleman

Length of meeting: 7:00PM–10:35PM

Commission Members Present:

John Anderson (Chair), Brent Carper (Vice-chair), Scott Hodge, Lorena O'English, Angela Taylor.

Commission Members Absent: Jeff Joswig-Jones.

Joe O'Callaghan recused from meeting as he works for the proponent.

Others Present: RJ Lott (Pullman Director of Community Development); Cynthia Goodwater (Staff member), Steve Mader, Scott Sumner, Bob Olsen and over 80 members of the community including children (more people joined after the meeting started).

Items discussed:

Conduct simultaneous public hearings to review and recommend action on the proposed zone change and Comprehensive Plan Land Use Plan Map amendment involving the rezoning of 9.3 acres located in the southwest corner of Section 30 and the southeast quarter of Section 25, Township 15 North, range 45 East, W.M. on Military Hill.

This meeting was recorded.

Minutes:

Minutes of Regular Meeting of June 28, 2023 – Approved unanimously.

Discussion:

Scott Sumner, on behalf of Steve Mader, requested consideration of a zone change from R2 Low Density Multi-Family Residential to I1 Light Industrial. The applicant submitted this request to be able to excavate and crush rock for the future development of a development site into commercial space or residential housing.

RJ Lott presented the case to the Commission and indicated that there were no recommendations from the Planning staff.

He also indicated that they received over 100 letters/comments against the project from concerned citizens regarding the proposal by the time of the meeting.

Carper shared his concern early on regarding this proposal considering the housing around that area, already zoned for low density housing. The long-term concern expressed is that once re-zoned, there is no going back for future use of the area.

Steve Mader and Scott Sumner spoke first as proponents of the project. Bob Olsen and James XX spoke to support the proposal based on the idea that by having a quarry close to the housing development they are working on, will reduce costs and make housing more affordable, there would be less heavy traffic with rocks, and one of the goals is to support surrounding developments.

Proponents suggested that:

- The proposed site and equipment will be hardly seen by residents and from Kamiah school.
- The location of the quarry would be 35 ft. below school, and noise studies indicate that noise would be hardly heard.
- The rock for the development of the area would be used on site. The land is owned by Mader and it is the "ideal location."
- This would not be a rock pit forever. It would result on 200-300 loads of rock to be used on site.
- Mader has a plan for the area after the rock is used for the development.
 - a natural ravine would be left to the neighborhood. Would like to use the top soil when closing the rock pit.
- Mader indicated that the idea behind this proposal is to reduce traffic on neighboring streets. Location is on site to transport rock through Albion road. It is their own rock, so there would be less transportation of rocks, would reduce costs, and lower wear and tear of the roads.
- They indicated that there is no competition with other quarries, and they are only looking for ways to reduce costs.
- Crushing activities would be 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, and be done in 6 weeks. There would be dust control.
- A supporter indicated that this is Mader's land, owns the land and the rock, so if he wants to use it he should be allowed to do it.

Over 80 members of the community, including children, attended the meeting and close to 30 individuals spoke objecting the proposal.

Many attendees had signs indicating their strong objection to the proposal, and the first couple speakers (Cordovas), young students from Kamiah Elementary School, spoke eloquently against it before dozens of others spoke. 30 minutes were added to the time allotted for those against the proposal, an extension that was requested loudly by the community members and accepted by the Commission.

To share the thoughts expressed by each one of the speakers would be too lengthy in this report, so hopefully the video recording of the meeting will be available for interested community members to view.

Opponents' thoughts include:

- Dust can affect lungs especially among your children
- Industrial zoning should be away from residential areas
- Suggested that S. Mader has so much land, that he could move this quarry to another site further away from school and neighborhoods
- Serious concerns regarding noise and dust close to school
- "No" to industrial encroaching in neighborhood
- Respect for residential codes
- The aquifer would be impacted
- This quarry would be a change to the Comprehensive Plan, and it would impact public health and safety
- The quarry would bring issues related to: noise, dust, and heavy equipment needed that would impact the area
- Explosives would be used and would impact neighbors in variety of ways

- Medical issues were brought up such as Silicosis; the pollution from Silicon dust needs to be considered
- Although the intentions of Mr. Mader might be good, once the land is open, the land cannot go back and more crushing could happen in the future
- This proposal has been a slap on the face to neighbors. Consideration of noise and dust is necessary.
- “No blasting next to schools, it is unsafe”. Abandoned quarries are not safe.
- Dust impacts breathing especially those who suffer of lung illnesses (asthma). It is known around the world that quarries impact the breathing of people and diminishes the quality of life of the communities.
- Residents have chosen to stay in Pullman when they retired hoping for good quality of life: pleasant, esthetically pleasing, consideration for the health of children, a Comprehensive Plan that protected areas that exist, etc. The quarry is negative to the health of Pullman residents.
- Resident on Brayton Rd. lives below the potential quarry, is very concerned about sound and as a teacher at Kamiah school, the noise will mean that students and teachers will have to wear ear protection, what is detrimental to learning.
- Concerns with noise pollution overall; noise will funnel through houses. Noise stresses animals that they have.
- Ms. Orr indicated that she lives 1000 feet from the proposed quarry, adjacent to the quarry site. Once rezoned, there will be no turn back; this is a permanent change.
- The aquifer will be impacted and there will be significant need for water. To support the quarry.
- Respect the zoning, since there are rules for zoning. The developer might suggest that the costs will be lower, but the reality is that it will be lesser cost to the developer, but not a benefit to the community. In legal terms this proposal would not be approved. There is no respect for the Comprehensive Plan, and if the decision to change the zoning would be brought to court it would be overturned.
- Consider the dangers of flying rock that moves fast and is unavoidable, on top of the blasting and the vibration on surrounding neighborhood.
- Consider the impact on water basin, pollutants, temperature changes, the ecosystem, changes on the landscape, impact on wells, on aquifer - issues that need to be taken into consideration.
- Destruction of roads with the heavy traffic through neighborhood streets. Industrial zoning requires an arterial road, something that is not available at this point.
- Mr. Joe Thornton, representing Pullman School District, indicated that PSD is in opposition to this rezoning. Kamiah school site was chosen to be surrounded by residential areas not a quarry.
- Need for trees not a quarry, and wind issues in Pullman should be taken into consideration.
- Chronic health issues already exist. Constant winds in Pullman will carry dust throughout and will impact people as well as agriculture.

Discussion by the Planning Commission included the issues mentioned by attendees and letters previously sent by concerned citizens.

Acknowledgement: Mr. Mader and engineers have credibility on what they propose and what they do. They are up front and are honest.

Rezoning: one issue to consider is what would happen in the area in 20-40 years from now.

Struggle: quarrying vs. rock crushing. It is intermittent blasting.

The interest they have are buildings and developing homes, not to run quarries.

The **economic impact** – the selling and buying of homes nearby

Issues:

Industrial zone – impact and final decision put on City Council

Rock crushing is OK

The site is not close to an arterial street for now.

Words from the PSD comments need to be considered strongly – lots of weight.

Appreciated the participation of so many people.

Support for Mader and his efforts. There will be crushing of rocks and noise anyway.

Reiterated:

Pullman School District objects on the basis that it would compromise the original intent of placing a school in an area designated as R2 and that it would discourage students and families from walking to the grade school.

Other Business.

Ideas brought up for further discussion:

- Developing trails on past rail lines that would connect with the Chipman trail.
- Possible further discussion on rock quarry on a different location

E. UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. August 23, 2023 (cancelled)
2. September 27, 2023
3. October 25, 2023

F. ADJOURNMENT

10:35 PM

Submitted items by proponents:

- A Location and Zoning Map
- B Zone Change Application No. REZ-22-02
- C Applicant's Proposed Findings of Fact
- D Applicant's Site Schematic
- E Environmental Checklist
- F MDNS
- G Environmental Checklist, Resubmitted
- H MDNS, Reissued
- I Environmental Checklist, Revision
- J Retained MDNS
- K-1 Draft Resolution No. PC-2023-8 Recommending Approval
- K-2 Draft Resolution No. PC-2023-8 Recommending Denial
- L-1 Draft Resolution No. PC-2023-9 Recommending Approval
- L-2 Draft Resolution No. PC-2023-9 Recommending Denial
- M Written Comments Received as of July 19, 2023, at 11:30 a.m. (It was indicated that more than 100 written comments had been submitted by meeting time.)