

Rochester Township and Zoning Commission Meeting: February 8, 2022

Chair: Arthur Handelman

Members Present: Brad Lewis, Laura Laudon, Brian Zmolek, Jamie Neisen, Arthur Hadelman, Chris Fogarty

Guests: Bill Tointen, Roger Ihrke. Eighteen members of the public

Chair Arthur Handelman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The meeting minutes from January 11, 2022 were reviewed with some changes to be made by Laura Laudon.

Mr. Tointen of WSE Massey Engineering was called to speak. His client, Leitzen Sand and Gravel, is seeking permission to mine up to 15.6 acres just west of Old Valley Road, about a half mile from the Izaak Walton Wetlands.

Mr. Tointen stated the first step would be the zoning change and the second step a conditional use permit.

Mr. Tointen explained that sand would be extracted to make concrete which would be affordable to taxpayers. The major reason is that the sand wouldn't have to be hauled a long distance which drives up the cost.

Mr. Tointen said the demand for concrete is going to escalate pointing out that there are projects in the works for roads plus bridges over Highway 14 and 104. Mr. Tointen also said 65% of concrete is used in residential construction.

Mr. Tointen stated once the sand mining operation is completed, it would make way for a 17 home development. The area from sand mining would become a pond, which has benefits of capturing the run off on Old Valley Road which is prone to flooding.

Mr. Tointen further explained that ponds are an amenity to residential development and in this case, they would create a wetland condition in and around the pond.

Mr. Tointen said Old Valley Road would not be used to haul sand in and out. They would not discharge anything into the Zumbro River. There will be no water wells used to mine the sand.

The mining pit would have to be 2,000 feet and more from the Isaac Walton area.

Mr. Tointen was unsure how many years it would take to mine this. He was involved with the Salem Lake project. It is now a residential area and took 22 years to mine.

The trucks would haul out on Salem Road (a county road) and a bypass/turn lane would be required.

Mr. Tointen said Leitzen Sand and Gravel bought the entire 73 acres in December. He said the resources need to be taken out before it gets developed.

Mr. Tointen said the noise is tough for individuals that live in the area. There is also concern about silica sand which is known to be a health hazard from breathing it in. Mr. Tointen said a 2015 report doesn't indicate any silica sand in this area.

Another complaint with sand mining is dust. Mr. Tointen said they would use water to keep the sand wet and try to mitigate that.

Chair Handelman then asked members of the public to speak.

The comments are summarized as follows:

On January 25 there was a public notice about the proposal for sand mining/future development. This was a very short notice, given meeting today is on February 8.

Not opposed to development, but would like to know duration of sand mining.

Big concern is protection of wetlands and wooded area around the river.

Similar operations have had a negative impact on the environment.

There's concern about truck traffic given families with young children that live in the area.

Mr. Tointen's 2015 report doesn't spell out that there is not any silica sand.

Old Valley Road is known for flooding. Concerned about how sand mining will impact this.

Concerned about safety in the area with truck traffic especially on Salem Road.

Questions/Concerns about resale value, truck traffic, sand and dust blowing.

How will sand mining/truck traffic affect pedestrians, cyclists on the road.

Concerned about length of time to mine sand, flooding in the area.

Public Comments: Continued

Feels the proposal is confusing. Use the resources (sand) but protect the resources. It needs to be spelled out on both sides.

The Public Comment period was closed.

Commission Discussion

Mr. Brad Lewis is concerned about road access given Old Valley Road or Salem Court cannot be used to haul.

There was a plan in place to create access to Salem Road, but that existing access application has now expired. A new application would have to be submitted to Olmsted County Public Works.

One positive is that this is all local sand, like the sand mining project which is now Salem Sound development.

Proximity of the sand mining was discussed earlier as a plus, which would lower the overall cost of hauling it. Some feel this is not really an issue.

Others wonder if this zoning is acceptable, is it beyond our jurisdiction?

Mr. Brad Lewis made a motion to take no action at this time, but rather continue the hearing until we get road access to County Road 25. Also, it was stated that by continuing the hearing, it would be another opportunity for the residents to hear more about this.

Collin Patterson seconded the motion.

Brad Lewis made a motion to close the meeting. Chair Arthur Handelman seconded the motion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Laudon

Approved unanimously
Arthur Handelman
4/12/22