

# Compromise hopefully will end long battle over quarry's future

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IT TOOK MORE THAN a decade, but a constructive compromise has been reached over the future of the San Rafael Rock Quarry.

Neighborhood leader Bonnie Marmor urged Marin County supervisors to approve the deal at Tuesday's meeting on what has been a polarizing issue for far too long.

The agreement provides reasonable protection for neighbors and allows the quarry, an important Marin and Bay Area economic resource, to continue its operations.

Aimi Dutra Krause, speaking for the family-run quarry, said reaching a compromise seems "almost dreamlike."

Her reaction is understandable.

This has been a debate where it often seemed finding common ground appeared to be impossible.

In fact, Supervisor Susan Adams once joined neighbors in protesting the quarry and calling for it to be shut down.

A county lawsuit to do just that, however, was rejected in 2004 by a Marin Judge John Sutro, who ruled that the quarry had a right to continue its Marin mining operation. He also ordered the county to adopt operating conditions that addressed neighbors' concerns.

That ruling is reflected in the 174 conditions placed on the quarry that address neighbors' complaints about traffic noise and dust.

The quarry was there first, predating its residential neighbors by decades. For many years, they got along.

In fact, in the early 1980s, the quarry's then owner said it would be closed before the end of the century. But new owners took over the quarry. Demand for its rock for building roads and levees rose. So did the blasting and heavy truck traffic.

At the same time, the county and San Rafael allowed homes to be built closer to the quarry.

The combination set the stage for a lengthy battle.

That fight may have come to a conclusion with Tuesday's board vote.

It's now up to the quarry to fulfill the conditions placed on its hours and operations. It's also up to the county to make sure the quarry follows the rules.

Lax county oversight of the quarry fueled the dispute. Supervisors need to assure neighbors that they can depend on the county to follow through with its part of the agreement.

The final piece of the agreement was a compromise over the quarry's hours of operations. While the quarry

wanted to continue its loading operations until 10 p.m., it met neighbors halfway, agreeing to stop loading by 9 p.m. on most nights between April and the end of October.

It was among the important compromises reached by Adams and county staff, who deserve credit for listening to both sides and looking for solutions to the conflict.

The agreement reflects a lot of give and take between Dutra, neighbors and the county. The imposition of 174 conditions is an example of just how difficult it was to come to a meeting of the minds.

This appears to be a solid beginning of a good-neighbor relationship between the quarry and residents who live nearby.