

Judge rules on Roblar quarry legal counsel

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A Sonoma County judge has sided with the opponents of a rock quarry planned north of Petaluma in a dispute over free legal counsel.

The judge denied a motion from the owner of the quarry, John Barella, to disqualify the opponents' legal counsel on the grounds that the firm had represented a real estate group that Barella is invested in.

The firm, Morgan, Lewis, and Brockius, was allowed to represent the opponents' group, Citizens Advocating for Roblar Rural Quality or CARRQ, despite its relationship with Basin Street real estate, in which Barrella is the single largest investor.

Judge Elliot Daum found that Barella hadn't retained the firm to advocate on his behalf in the quarry case.

Quarry opponents, including many Petaluma residents, argue that the project, approved by the county in December, will harm water and air quality and open space protected land. Barella and his supporters say that Sonoma County needs a local source of concrete.

A oral argument in the case is scheduled for June 8, if requested. After the decision on the legal counsel, the larger legal case on the quarry will continue.