

# Developer travels to muster regional quarry support

**Jeff Horseman, Riverside Press-Enterprise, 3-6-11**

Eastvale is more than 40 miles northwest of Temecula. But that didn't stop the fledgling city's council from passing a resolution last month supporting a quarry in Temecula's foothills.

The resolution followed a presentation by quarry developer Granite Construction, which is going outside Temecula to muster support for Liberty Quarry, a project strongly opposed by Temecula's council and a grass-roots residents' network.

Banning and Beaumont in recent years have passed pro-quarry resolutions that are identical in wording. The Temecula City Council will formally oppose the quarry with a resolution on its Tuesday agenda.

Planned for a 414-acre site, the quarry is the subject of two Riverside County Planning Commission hearings on April 26 and May 3 in Temecula.

Granite also has pro-quarry letters signed by the presidents of the Lake Elsinore Valley and Greater Riverside chambers of commerce as well as the president of the Monday Morning Group, a Riverside-based alliance of elected officials and business people, including Ronald R. Redfern, publisher and CEO of The Press-Enterprise.

Granite spokeswoman Karie Reuther said in some instances, Granite approached these cities and groups asking for support. Other times, the groups offered to endorse the quarry, she said.

The resolutions and letters collected by Granite echo the same argument: Liberty Quarry will provide an economic boost and millions of dollars in tax revenue while reducing truck traffic, improving air quality and providing a local source of aggregate, a crushed rock that's used to help construct everything from landscaping to roads to office building foundations.

"After a technical briefing with Liberty Quarry representatives, it is our opinion that this project will provide a solution to a county-wide aggregate shortage and allow easier delivery of other necessary goods to their markets," read a 2008 letter to the county Board of Supervisors from the president of the Riverside County Farm Bureau.

## **'A broad base'**

In an e-mail, Reuther wrote: "Many groups and individuals have recognized that Liberty Quarry is a regional facility that will provide economic and environmental benefits throughout Riverside County.

"We are fortunate to have a broad base of supporters who acknowledge the regional need for this project."

The Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce has not taken a formal stance on the quarry. President and CEO Alice Sullivan said the chamber board discussed the project, but decided members should educate themselves and make their own decisions.

A number of residents in the Indio area in the eastern Coachella Valley opposed Temecula's 2009 attempt to block the quarry by annexing the land where it would operate. The residents told a boundary-setting panel they were sick of gravel-hauling trucks traveling on their roads to serve Temecula's aggregate needs.

Ray Wolfe, Caltrans district director for Riverside and San Bernardino counties, wrote the Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission in 2009 to support the quarry.

"The department has been vocal in support of local aggregate sources in recent years," he wrote. "This is due to the dwindling supply of aggregate in our great state."

### **Regional vs. local**

The commission rejected Temecula's annexation proposal, saying the quarry was a regional issue best decided at the county level. Temecula officials maintained the quarry is a local matter since it will have the greatest effect on nearby residents.

Quarry opponents say Granite's economic arguments are baseless, since quarry pollution could wreck the Temecula Valley's lucrative tourism industry. They maintain the project will fill the air with hazardous silicate dust, clog freeways with diesel fume-spewing trucks, cause noise and light pollution and spoil a neighboring ecological reserve.

The Temecula Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Fallbrook Healthcare District, which covers communities in north San Diego County, oppose the quarry. Both groups wrote letters that are posted on the website of the anti-quarry group Save Our Southwest Hills.

Regarding Eastvale, which incorporated last October, anti-quarry activist Jerri Arganda of Rainbow said: "This is a brand-new city, and they ought to be practicing being a city instead of trying to figure out what Temecula should be doing. I just don't get it. I think Granite got to them."

Eastvale Councilman Ike Bootsma said he was aware of the quarry controversy before Granite's visit. He said Granite asked to be on the council agenda.

"We thought it was a project that is needed because there's a lot of truck traffic on (interstates 15 and 215)," Bootsma said. "If we can reduce the air pollution and that stuff, I think it's a benefit for the whole community."

Bootsma said he didn't want to give the impression that Eastvale knew what was best for Temecula. "We just felt that ... it was overall good for Riverside County."