

# City approves resolution opposing Liberty Quarry

*City finds fault with the project's environmental documentation*

**Aaron Claverie, Escondido North County Times, 3-9-11**

The Temecula City Council took a formal stand Tuesday night against Granite Construction's Liberty Quarry project.

After hearing from area residents who fear the project could bring air pollution and sap Southwest County's economic vitality, the council voted 5-0 to approve a resolution opposing the quarry.

Councilman Jeff Comerchero, addressing why the council had not weighed in until this point, said it would have been premature to oppose the project before the environmental documentation had been completed.

In January, the Riverside County Planning Department decided, against the city's recommendation, to not conduct additional study of the project, a decision that triggered the council's action.

"Granite has said that 70 percent of their aggregate will be going to San Diego County," Comerchero said, pausing for effect. "Put it in San Diego."

That line and the council's vote were greeted with applause by the residents who had spoken against the quarry.

Granite has proposed digging an open-pit mine on hundreds of acres of Riverside County land near the San Diego County community of Rainbow and Temecula's southern boundary. The project has been working its way through the county's planning pipeline for years and next month the county's Planning Commission is staging in Temecula the first of two meetings to review the quarry's environmental documentation.

That documentation, a huge environmental impact report that has been pored over by supporters and foes of the project, was criticized by the council as incomplete and a "press release" in favor of the quarry.

"EIRs are not supposed to be partisan," Comerchero said. "That's clearly not the case here."

Other council members also weighed in, saying the location ---- land near an huge ecological reserve to the west ---- was terrible.

Granite, in a statement, said that it was disappointed that the city would consider a resolution that is not supported by the facts.

"The county's draft EIR shows the city residents will not be impacted by the operation of Liberty Quarry. There is also overwhelming evidence showing there are large economic and environmental benefits to the city and the region if Liberty Quarry is developed. Regardless of the city passing this resolution, Granite remains committed to meeting with the city in an effort to address their concerns and find common ground," wrote Granite spokeswoman Karie Reuther in an e-mail to The Californian.

Before the council's vote, area residents took the podium in the Civic Center's council chambers to blast the quarry as a "filthy project" that would put into jeopardy the area's reputation as a vacation destination, create air pollution and drive away businesses.

Temecula resident Wayne Hall said that the vibrations from blasting at the quarry would be strong enough to shake lights miles away and that silica dust would be kicked up and sent into the valley could cause health issues.

"It's not as bad as asbestos but it's still bad," he said.

Another speaker, Edward Monroe, urged residents to think about ways every day to "drive Granite nuts." He also questioned the weight of a resolution, saying stronger measures were needed.

"Get Granite in court and get them out of here," he said.

Other speakers said they were worried about the dust from the quarry negatively affecting the health of local children and the wine industry.

Fred Bartz, a member of a group that has opposed the quarry, read from a letter that was sent to him by a Temecula business owner. If the quarry is eventually approved, Bartz said, the business owner has vowed to move out of the area in response because of issues the company had when it was near a quarry in the past.