

Duarte not happy with study, schedule regarding review of Azusa mining plan

Daniel Tedford, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 1-15-10

AZUSA - For months, Duarte officials hinted that they weren't too pleased with a proposal to allow mining near the city's border with Azusa.

This week, they made it official.

Duarte officials Wednesday dropped off a letter at an Azusa Planning Commission meeting, outlining issues the city has with a mining project proposed by Vulcan Materials.

Duarte officials say the city's view of the mountains will be spoiled, that Azusa did not consider options that would have less impact on Duarte, and that Azusa is not taking enough time to review input.

"We are going to make sure all the Ts are crossed and Is are dotted," Duarte City Manager Darrell George said Thursday. "Not only are we not getting any financial benefit, we are losing the biggest benefit of all, which is the view."

The Azusa Planning Commission is scheduled to vote Feb. 10 on an environmental report for the project, just five days after the public comment period closes.

Vulcan has a permit to mine 190 acres in Azusa near Fish Creek. The company planned to mine 80 acres on an area east of the creek, but now they want to switch to 80 acres to the west, which is closer to Duarte. The move also requires a new environmental review.

Officials from Vulcan Materials Company said any issue with the environmental report should be addressed to Azusa. They declined to comment further.

Azusa officials maintain the public input process has been fair and open.

"We have set aside three meetings so we can vet those issues they might have," said Conal McNamara, the assistant community development director in Azusa. "I would encourage Duarte to make comments at the meeting on (Jan. 27) to give staff sufficient time to respond to issues."

He added that Azusa would consider a new plan for mining, but none has been proposed.

"We can't make (Vulcan) go some place they don't own the land," McNamara said. "We would certainly be reasonable in hearing if they think there is another alternative that should be considered."

Duarte officials said they would like a joint meeting on the matter with the Azusa City Council. But Azusa officials said they already understand Duarte's point of view.

"We had a joint council meeting with them last year and issues were voiced and considered all along," Delach said. "Vulcan has had many community meetings where they are invited to attend and they are always invited to attend meetings with planning commission and council."

If Vulcan is allowed to mine the western location, it would cut small 1-to-2-foot steps in the hillsides. But if the operation remains in the east, company officials said they will cut the 30-foot "Mayan steps" commonly used in such operations.