

Azusa Planning Commission reviews Vulcan plan

Daniel Tedford, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 3-11-10

Azusa and Duarte residents who oppose a controversial mining plan took a final opportunity to make their case Wednesday at a meeting to review the proposal.

The Azusa Planning Commission had not yet made a decision on Vulcan Materials Co.'s proposal to shift mining operations along the Azusa-Duarte border as of 11p.m. Wednesday.

More than 200 residents packed the room as public comment stretched for nearly two hours.

Duarte Mayor Margaret Finlay said Vulcan should act with a stronger conscience and environmental awareness.

"How many times do you hear government ought to act like a business? Right now, I think you need to have a business act more like a government," Finlay said. "Vulcan needs to be held to a higher standard than what they have been."

Todd Priest, spokesman for Vulcan, said concern for the local communities is a priority for the company.

"One of our core values is maintaining the commitments we make in the communities where we work and our employees live," Priest said. "We are proud of our record on environmental stewardship and being able to provide superior reclamation techniques that we will be providing at Azusa Rock."

Azusa city staff tried to answer questions raised by the public while also spelling out the proposal during a report prior to the commission's discussion.

"We would contend that this is a better project," said Curt Christiansen, Azusa's economic and community development director.

Christiansen said benefits from the proposal include microbenching, concurrent reclamation and fixing mining activity from the previous owner.

"Staff, believe it or not, is coming from an objective angle," said Conal McNamara, assistant economic and community development director. "We don't have an ax to grind."

Vulcan Materials Co. has a permit to mine 190 acres near Fish Canyon. The company wants to exchange 80 acres of land on its eastern property line for the ability to mine 80 acres near its western property line.

The 270-acre Vulcan property is in Azusa but rests along the Duarte border. For Vulcan to move forward, Azusa officials would have to approve Vulcan's plan to mine the undisturbed western 80 acres.

If the operation moves to the west, the total annual amount mined from Vulcan's land would decrease 10million tons to 6million tons per year.

As added incentive, Vulcan has included a new technique in its plan that would contour the hills to look more natural.

In an environmental report commissioned by the city, the only significant impact was the view, or aesthetics, for some Duarte residents.