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Communication the key: St. Marys

Brenda Jefferies

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As Ward 15 Councillor Margaret McCarthy pushes for a public meeting with the new owners of the proposed quarry site in Mountsberg, St. Marys Cement is asking for time to assess the details of the application.

"The community overwhelmingly wants me to conduct a meeting, as opposed to an open house," McCarthy noted, alluding to a dozen or so residents who have emailed her office.

After taking ownership of the site, St. Mary's distributed a flyer to households in the area, outlining a plan to hold open houses. The flyer also included a phone number (1-866-602-0080) and email address for direct communication with the company. But McCarthy stressed there must be a public forum to discuss the application.

"At an open house, there is no opposition, and what is being said should be recorded," she noted. "This is of huge importance to my entire community. They have put forward a huge amount of time and energy to understand the process.

"People need to be able to challenge what is being said, and to seek clarification."

Vice-president and general manager of CBM Aggregates John Moroz stressed that while a public meeting may indeed be part of the process, the company must spend time examining the work done by Lowndes Holdings Corp. beforehand.

"I'm not saying we will not have (public meetings), but we're not in a position today to commit to a timeline on it," he said. "Before we go and start telling people things, we have to make sure we have all our ducks in a row."

Moroz noted that St. Marys has faced scrutiny from citizens' groups in other communities where it operates, and that the best strategy is to provide information on specific issues.

"The best thing we can do is share information and work with the community," he said.

McCarthy indicated that she plans to schedule a public meeting in September, noting that the timing should allow St. Marys time to assess the details of the application.

"If (Mr. Moroz) is genuinely interested in dialoguing with the community, it's in his best interest to participate fully in an open public meeting," she said. "He loses ground if he doesn't attend. And he loses ground if he insists on controlling the forums."

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