

LOCALNEWS

KOOCHICHING COUNTY BOARD

Board responds to blast complaints

Commissioners consider amending ordinance

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

In response to complaints about blasting at area rock quarries, Koochiching County commissioners referred a proposal to amend an ordinance to the Planning Commission for review.

The board again heard Tuesday from Ranier area residents who said blasting at a rock quarry is responsible for damage to their homes and their health.

County Environmental Services Director Dale Olson proposed amending the county's zoning ordinance to require all new and existing quarry, mining and gravel operators that use blasting and/or crushing as part of its operation to apply for a conditional use permit. In addition, Olson said he would have the proposed amendment reviewed by county Attorney Jeff Naglosky.

Complaints at last week's meeting seemed directed at Bowman Construction Co. Inc. operations east of Ranier. Carl Bowman told The Journal last week his operation is "grandfathered in" from recent requirements and not required to have a conditional use permit.

However, he said his operations meet those standards anyway.

Olson said he attempted to gain information from a quarry operator to find out if blasting has been conducted differently in recent years to cause the complaints, but was unable to get the information.

Commissioner Wade Pavleck said he's heard complaints about three blasting operations in recent years and said the proposed amendment should be considered.

The proposed amendment would provide the county more control over quarry operations, Olson said. Two operations in the county are not required to have CUP for blasting, he said.

The Planning Commission is expected to review the issue, gather input, and make a formal recommendation to the county board. Should the board move forward with amending the ordinance, a public hearing would be required, county Administrative Director Teresa Briggs said.



Wade Pavleck

Steve Nelson, an attorney who has represented Bowman Construction in the past, said the complaints are meaningful and blasting has been conducted by a couple different operators near Ranier.

He urged the board to encourage people with damage caused by the blasting to seek civil remedies in court. Each blasting operation assumes some liability, he said.

"The state has regulations," he said. "Bowman's has had no claims. Before you go down a road that could be costly, direct people to take civil remedies to a court of law rather than the board."

The board received a letter dated May 13 from Ranier Mayor Dennis Wagner asking, on behalf of concerned citizens of Ranier, to require all blasting operations near Ranier to be conducted under conditional use permits. In addition, the letter asked that conditions of the permits include pre-blast surveys of all structures and wells within one-half mile of the quarry parcel and notification to all property owners within one-half mile of blasting prior to the blasting.

MILT LAYMAN



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

Sports Shop owner Milt Layman bikes to work on Third Street Friday on Bike to Work Day, part of May's Bike Month celebration.

SCOUTING FOR A CAUSE



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of local girl scout troops recently donated unsold boxes of cookies to the Falls Hunger Coalition. A report from one of the girls' parents says cookie sales were up this year because owners/managers of Super One, Kmart, County Market, International House of Bowling and Boise allowed the boxed treats to be sold at the respective businesses.

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