**Asphalt plant fact and speculation**

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[**Asphalt plant fact and speculation**](http://calaverasenterprise.com/opinion/columns/article_ab39fbda-3a37-11e5-89df-1756c1845931.html) **By Muriel Zeller Calaveras Enterprise**

Ford Construction and C.B. Asphalt hosted a meeting on July 28 to educate Valley Springs area residents about the asphalt plant Ford and C.B. have proposed at Hogan Quarry. The quarry is between the Rancho Calaveras and La Contenta subdivisions near the intersection of Silver Rapids and Hogan Dam roads. The asphalt plant proposal has generated substantial opposition among its residential neighbors. A handout provided at the meeting was titled, “Fact Sheet,” but some facts turned out to be assumption, opinion or error.

The fact sheet said the plant will “create up to 25 new jobs and 300 trucking jobs.” This was an assumption based on the applicant’s past experience. The handout also said there will be “a maximum of 625 additional trucks annually” to deliver the asphalt binder. The problem is the proponents didn’t say in addition to what. If they are able to estimate additional trucks, then, presumably, they know how many trucks are currently on the road. Plus, proponents are planning on using recycled asphalt pavement for production of new asphalt, but there has been no mention of how many trucks will be required to deliver the recycled pavement.



The air pollution control district permit to operate the quarry allows for the off-site delivery of 300,000 tons of aggregate per year. The C.B. Asphalt estimate that each truck can carry 25 tons would amount to 12,000 trucks allowed under the current permit, which translates to 32-plus trucks per day. We are not currently seeing 32 trucks per day, but if we did, that might explain the proponents’ estimate that they would create 300 trucking jobs. The maximum production of the asphalt plant would be 250,000 tons per year, which is 50,000 tons short of their allowed aggregate output, but still representative of 10,000 trucks annually. The question is, are the 625 trucks in addition to what is allowed or in addition to the number of trucks currently hauling aggregate from the quarry?

The binder will likely be coming from Elk Grove, so those trucks will go through the four-way stop at Highways 12 and 26 in the heart of Valley Springs. During the meeting, many people expressed their concern about increased truck traffic and its potential to negatively impact and degrade local roads. They were assured there would be “no impact to the roads,” because “they’re designed to handle this.” The fact sheet also assured them that trucks will not be traveling through “any residential areas,” which met with utter disbelief. Proponents’ attorney allowed that this “could have been drafted better,” because, of course, trucks going to and coming from the quarry travel on Silver Rapids Road and parts of Highway 26, which are in the Rancho Calaveras subdivision.

Property values were a major concern for many of those present, because of the potential nuisances associated with the plant, such as the overbearing smell of asphalt which, in spite of efforts to minimize the smell at the plant, will still be detectable from open trucks. The handout reassured residents that the asphalt plant “will have no anticipated impacts on property values,” which was strongly contested. California law requires home sellers to disclose any nuisances associated with nearby industrial uses.

The final fact was actually an opinion regarding the application for authority to construct, which the proponents state is not a discretionary action “and not applicable to the California Environmental Quality Act.” This opinion is not shared by the Planning Commission, which denied the proponents’ appeal on this subject.

During the meeting, proponents touted the recently released engineering evaluation of the asphalt plant commissioned by the local air pollution control district, which recommended that the authority to construct be granted, but proponents failed to mention that the authority to construct cannot be granted without a conditional use permit from the planning department, which would trigger environmental review under CEQA. Proponents are appealing the determination that the county code requires a conditional use permit due to the use of hazardous materials.

Proponents have repeatedly asserted that in regard to the asphalt plant, county code is superfluous, specifically, “The conditional use permit requirement in 17.42.034 for operations using hazardous materials in the M2 zone should not apply here, or is unnecessary here, because of all of the federal, state and local agencies that will have to sign off on the hot plant operations.” However, without the environmental review required by a conditional use permit, we will not be able to compare projected future use with the existing operation and, if necessary, require mitigation for any negative impacts.

I am a supporter and former member of the board of [MyValleySprings.com](http://myvalleysprings.com/), a local non-profit organization opposed to the asphalt plant. Multiple appeals by opponents and proponents are currently pending and will be heard by the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, on Aug. 11 and Aug. 13, respectively. Let’s hope they get the facts.

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