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Alna Select Board

RE: Comments from Alna residents, land owners & tax payers

We have previously written regarding the Mining Ordinance, our thoughts regarding how this impacts our town and its citizens and our complete disagreement pertaining to how the Select Board hijacked a Planning Board responsibility which for all appearances was a politically motivated decision not in the best interest of our small town and its residents. Deciding to offer the company Crooker a seat on the Mining Ordinance Committee, in our opinions, was and continues to be just wrong. Inviting a major conflict of interest into this important decision making committee flies against the entire reason our town is revising this ordinance and, as we can clearly see, has resulted in a watered down ordinance aimed at preserving, at the very least, the more than fifty year dominant and intrusive presence that Crooker has placed upon our town at the very real expense of our roads, our environment, our Atlantic Salmon River the Sheepscot and on the quality of life here in town. While it sounds good on the surface, it is clearly opposed to what town decision making should entail. This also extends to some of the individuals "appointed" to this committee who clearly have an interest here that extends way beyond ensuring that our town and our residents interests are addressed without bias. We have already stated that this process was flawed from the beginning yet you chose to ignore our input and the input of dozens of others who pointed to the flaw in your process.

The environment and resident quality of life are paramount in making ordinances that by nature are designed to find a balance/compromise between the needs of outside interests (in this case) and what we would argue are the higher level needs of our town. All sorts of statements have been proffered over the past year or more from somehow claiming that Alna's ordinances need to take into consideration jobs and political support, as encouraged by the Select Board, yet ignoring some very real and pertinent facts such as just how long is it reasonable to have a significant and detrimental environmental and quality of life negative influence in our town? 20 years? 50 years? 100 years? Is it truly appropriate to be discussing water tables today when the applicant, over the course of more than fifty years, dramatically altered the aquifer to the point where today's application now considers the applicant's directly modified water table upon which to make future decisions? For over fifty years this operation has been the only source of very significant truck traffic, noise and road damage often beginning as early as 5:30 AM and running through what otherwise would be a quiet residential and historic village?

Stepping back for a moment here, realizing that the Select Board has already, through their actions, created a committee and situation where the assumption is that "our job" is not to suggest that this activity may well be incompatible with our town and its future wishes, and seeing little effort to address this, this ordinance should not be considered without inputting a

number of restrictions aimed at at least improving the current situation in the best interest of Alna while looking to a future where such an incompatible use should be limited to smaller and significantly more in keeping with our Alna world, gravel pits as would have existed in the 1800's and early 1900's. In our opinion and as has been shown to be the case, large commercial operations are not compatible. Without these limits, we are simply paving the way for certainly in the case of Crooker's pit, to continue the status quo and even expand their footprint, both of which we strongly oppose.

1. **LIMIT THE TOTAL SIZE:** There needs to be an additional provision putting a maximum total limit on the size of the affected area of a mining operation/gravel pit so a pit doesn't just keep expanding across the landscape forever. The ordinance limits quarries to a total affected area of 1 acre, but **there is currently no limit on the total size of a borrow pit.** Limits of 5 – 10 acres were mentioned at the hearing. (Article III, Section 2.) 10 acres is a very large area and far too large to consider here. **Even 5 acres is very large but that's the maximum I would accept.**
2. **WORKING PIT IS TOO BIG:** The proposed 5 acre limit on the size of the "working area" of a gravel pit is too big. This **non-vegetated excavation area should be less;** a limit to 1/2 – 2 acres was suggested at the hearing. (Article III, Section 2 (E)). **We would support 1/2 acre in keeping with the character of our town.**
3. **ESTABLISH BASELINE ACREAGE:** Existing pits that are registering within 180 days **should submit specific information showing how big the pit is in acreage.** This is needed to establish a baseline to regulate future expansions. (Article IV, Section 1(A)(7)).

The CEO or planning board needs to be the one to review registrations and not the Town Clerk. There is nothing anywhere that suggests the town clerk has or should have this responsibility.

We also would like to suggest that there be a time frame associated with any such "permit" meaning that the applicant should be required to state what their plans are for the life of the pit. Personal pits could be exempted using a "size" criteria but for commercial operations, the town should know how long such an activity is going to function.

We also want to see a plan for restoration of the abandoned or used up pit and there should be funds set aside by the applicant to ensure that a restoration plan is actually implemented. Perhaps there can also be

some arrangement for the land to be gifted to an organization such as Midcoast Conservancy for the land to become a nature preserve in the end.

In closing and as long-time residents of Alna, we continue to be extremely dissatisfied with the division encouraging and politically biased steps the Select Board continues to make on the heels of the Spinney debacle. The makeup of the Ordinance Committee and removing this task from the Planning Board are just two recent examples. Such decisions along with the rude and frankly shocking behavior that has been allowed to continue at meetings has disenfranchised more people than you can imagine from even considering attending let alone participating in town politics.

Sincerely,

Mark & Dale DesMeules

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