

COMMENTS ON PROPOSED ALNA MINING AND BLASTING ORDINANCE

To: Alna Planning Board

From: Stephen and Ellin Sheehy, 747 Wiscasset Road, Whitefield ME 04353

Date: January 23, 2024

Thank you for the excellent draft of the proposed ordinance. We live very close to the exiting Crooker mining site. Our property straddles the Alna/Whitefield town line. The following comments reflect several concerns we have about any proposed rock mining in Alna.

1. There is no benefit to the Town from rock mining. The existing mining operation demonstrates this. The Crooker operation pays minimal property taxes (around \$2000 per year), apparently reflecting an assessment of the land area, without regard to its fair market value as it produces millions of dollars worth of stone products. The recent monitoring analysis we received last week shows total production has increased from 30,480 yards in 2020 to 55,628 yards in 2023. We understand that Crooker anticipates that it could extract 100,000 yards or more per year in the future.
2. There is a significant negative impact on the Town from the existing mining operation and any future expansion of it or any new mining operation. The increased traffic and damage to roads is obvious. But the noise also impacts the right of people to enjoy the peace and quiet a rural community offers. Blasting events are infrequent and tolerable. But after the rock is blasted, it must be hammered into manageable pieces and then run through a crusher. The noise from the hammering and crushing is loud and, more concerning, constant, all day long, nearly every day. It's especially bad in warmer weather when more construction happens. Of course it is more noticeable then because our windows are open.
3. Extending any existing mining operations for five years is unnecessary and contrary to the stated purposes behind the proposed ordinance. The machinery used to break up and crush rock is portable and can be moved elsewhere. There's no major capital investment that requires an extended period to be recouped.
4. Rock mining and blasting represent a departure from traditional gravel extraction in Alna. When we moved to Alna in 1993, the operations at the existing Crooker Pit were markedly different from what goes on in a rock mining operation. There was no blasting, no hammering rock into smaller pieces and little, if any all day long crushing. I suggest limiting quarrying and blasting to end on January 1, 2026 would be fair to all.
5. The impact of mining permanently alters the land. The existing operation will, once it has been closed, leave a giant hole in the ground that will remain for thousands of years. Any reclamation will

merely require that slopes be stabilized and will do nothing to remediate the permanent damage to the land.

We appreciate the provision in the proposed draft that prohibits extraction within five feet of the seasonal high groundwater table. Those of us who have drinking water wells have no way to measure the risks associated with rock mining. But blasting below the water table surely creates an unacceptable risk. We note that according to the monitoring analysis we just received, Crooker used more than 35 tons (70,648 pounds) of explosives just in 2023. We are concerned about the potential impact of those chemicals being used in the same ground water system that provides our drinking water and that flows into Spring Brook, a tributary of the Sheepscot River.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Stephen Sheehy

Ellin Sheehy