

Dem leaders say plant needs study

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Editor:

There is a battle under way in Valley Springs that will have consequences for the local community and all of Calaveras County.

On one side is Hogan Quarry, a construction materials company that wants to build and operate a hot asphalt plant in an industrial zone off Hogan Dam Road in Valley Springs.

On the other is a group of local residents who are concerned about the impact of the plant on air pollution and their health.

Playing the role of referee is the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors who hold the power to approve the plant, require additional study, or deny the permit.

It should be noted that the asphalt plant has already been built at Hogan Quarry, signaling the confidence with which they thought the permit would be issued.

The phrase “slam dunk” comes to mind, but not so fast.

Currently, county supervisors have conditionally approved construction of the plant and voted down an appeal from Valley Springs residents to deny the permit. The Calaveras County Water District also filed an objection to the permit because they operate a drinking water intake facility downstream.

At the same time, the Calaveras Air Pollution Control Board has weighed in with the opinion that before the permit can be granted, further study must be undertaken to ascertain the amount of particles that will be released into the air.

Calaveras County Republicans have lobbied supervisors to fast track the plant in the name of “jobs” and shrugged off the very real concerns of Valley Springs residents as “anti-growth” and “anti-business.”

Calaveras County Democrats are concerned about the health of our neighbors and believe in their right to a full and unbiased disclosure of any risks. We also worry about the impact on Calaveras County taxpayers should the plant be permitted and allowed to operate. Without due diligence in preparing an Environmental Impact Study and complying with California clean air standards, the county runs the risk of massive fines from the state as well as monetary damages from any lawsuits that might be filed in the future.

Calaveras Democrats are not “anti-growth” or “anti-business.” We are pro-Calaveras residents and their right to transparency about an issue that may have negative impacts on their health.

If Calaveras County supervisors don’t care about the health of their constituency, then why did they run for office?

We urge Calaveras residents to contact their supervisors and demand that they slow down the fast track, study the issues, and know the consequences *before* the final permit for the asphalt plant is granted. If, after study, the risks to human health prove to be serious, county supervisors must deny the permit.

Tom Pratt

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