

Lay it on the line



By Nate Smelle

NO MATTER WHAT assignment it was that I reported on over the last few weeks, the talk around town has been revolved around the same topic...the aggregate quarry being proposed in the Township of Faraday by Lou Freymond, of Freymond Lumber. As a proud environmentalist I would be lying if I said I was thrilled at the idea of replacing 72 acres of mature forest with an aggregate quarry. On the other hand, as someone who has worked in construction and in the forestry industry I understand the need for aggregate in maintaining and developing public infrastructure.

Lining up outside the Bancroft Fish and Game Club on June 25 with a crowd of approximately 150 other concerned citizens I shuffled my way into the building hoping that there would still be a seat up front so I could hear what was being said during the presentation/Q&A session. Walking in the front door I was hit by a wave of sound from the collage of conversations coming from the crowd as they waited for the presentation to begin. Realizing that there were not any seats left because there were not any chairs set up I put two and two together and deduced that a public presentation about the quarry as promised in the invitation by EcoVue Consulting Services Inc. would not be happening on this night.

Instead, people were left standing around until they figured out on their own that the only information to be had was found in stations set up around the room. Although each station had someone to answer questions about how the quarry will affect the community it was virtually impossible to engage with these individuals given the ratio to which they were outnumbered by those wanting questions answered. With so many people asking questions and talking at the same time the sheer noise level in the room prohibited any kind of meaningful conversations from taking place.

Luckily I was not standing completely in the dark in respect to the project having been given a copy of the report prepared by EcoVue a week earlier by some of the property owners neighbouring the proposed site. Reviewing the more than 300 page book over the last week, I got a sense of what was being proposed. Sitting down with Lou Freymond before the meeting, was also helpful in understanding the scope and impact of the proposed quarry. Without this information going into the meeting it would have been hopeless to try and make sense of the graphs, charts and topographic maps decorating the space.

Nevertheless, the main question that I hoped would be answered during the meeting was not. What I want to know is whether this quarry will actually encourage substantial economic prosperity in the Bancroft area; or whether the noise, diesel and dust that come with the industry scare away the residents, cottagers and tourists that come here to escape the busyness of the city? Before we can make a sound decision as a community regarding the proposed quarry we need all of the cards on the table. For me personally, I cannot make a decision as to where I stand on the quarry without the input of the most important partner in this project...an informed public.

Turning onto Hwy. 62 as I left the meeting, I switched on the radio. Recognizing the guitar riff from the classic Triumph song, Lay it on the line. Fitting tune after that meeting. Cranking it up I headed for home.