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Washington County Supervisors Approve Asphalt Plant



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ABINGDON, Va. – After a grueling two-hour hearing and discussion, a divided Board of Supervisors approved a special-exception permit for an asphalt plant near Exit 22.

“I’m glad the way it went,” said Eddie Ramirez, owner of the small contracting company that wants to build the plant. He said availability of asphalt is a problem for construction companies in the area.

“There is no local competition in this area; there is one contractor,” Ramirez explained during a public hearing on the project. “You pay what they ask you to. You wait as long as they want, based on what their other business is. ... We would like to just be able to compete at the local level.”

After a public hearing and a heated discussion among board members, the project was approved 4-3

after the planning commission had recommended in a 4-3 vote to deny the permit.

Arguments focused on property values, traffic safety and whether a more suitable location could be found for the plant planned for Old Trail Road off Hillman Highway.

David Scyphers, the first to speak at the public hearing, has been one of the most vocal opponents of the plant. He said it would affect the planned sale of his subdivision lots nearby.

“Why does this have to be in this location? You’ve got an industrial park sitting at Exit 29,” Scyphers said. “That is closer to the Interstate than this and has better roads.”

Residents of Hillman Highway expressed concerns about the added heavy traffic of an estimated 30 dump trucks per day, and the board’s resolution included a request to the Virginia Department of Transportation to restrict truck traffic on the road.

Ramirez said for business reasons his trucks would travel Enterprise Road to Exit 22 – not Hillman Highway.

“We’ve already got industry up there,” said Supervisor Paul Price. “I don’t know if we can find a better place in the county that will adversely affect fewer people than this one will.”

Price and Supervisors Dulcie Mumpower, Odell Owens and Phil McCall voted in favor of approval. Supervisors Kenneth Reynolds, Jack McCrady and Tom Taylor were opposed.

“I think if we’re going to fulfill that requirement to look at for the health, safety and welfare of the people ... we need to support what the Planning Commission has recommended,” Taylor said.

While that section of the county is not zoned for such a business, the special-exception permit allows for light industry there.

Without controversy, the board also approved a rezoning request for more than 100 acres to be turned into a subdivision of more than 180 homes near Exit 32.

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