

Vance Creek Residents Worried About Possible Sand Mine

What appear to be test borings for a potential sand mine in the 5th Street area of Vance Creek Township are creating concerns for neighbors. Those neighbors were recently surprised by the exploratory activity, having heard nothing from the property owner to signal intention to consider a sand mine.

Vance Creek Township is unzoned and has no current regulations or ordinances regarding sand mines and their operations. Unregulated sand mines can operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week without control or provisions for protection for residents, such as monitoring wells for groundwater, or air quality testing. A prospective mine would only be bound by Barron County's requirement to file and have accepted a reclamation plan for any potential mine.

Over the past few months, members of the public during public comment portions of the meeting, have asked the Vance Creek Town board to enact licensing and ordinances to protect citizens from the impact of sand mines in the township. The Town Board has taken no official action regarding possible ordinances. At a town board meeting earlier in the fall, board member Mike Stafne told members of the public who came to question the board's stance on ordinances, that he had been working for 15 or 16 months on ideas to bring to the board about mining. Board members stressed that they had not officially considered anything, nor had they authorized Stafne to do the research he had been doing--that was entirely his action, they noted. Stafne said he was not yet ready to present those ideas, and as of the November town board meeting, responded to a question that he was still not ready with his ideas.

"We would like to meet with the town board at their January 8th meeting to tell them of our concerns and learn what protections they plan for residents in the event of any mine," said neighbors Gary and Kendra Quist. They and other neighbors are encouraging township residents with similar concerns to join them at the January 8th town board meeting. That meeting is scheduled for 8 p.m. at the town hall in Reeve.

Submitted by
David K. Williams