

Monday, November 19th, 2007

Mr. Reid Montgomery
Director, Rockford Zoning Board of Appeals
425 E. State Street
Rockford, Illinois 61104
Re: Mulford/Charles Street Asphalt Plant Special Use Permit Request

Dear Mr. Reid and the ZBA:

My name is Bob Kinnison and I have represented the citizens of Winnebago County Board District 10 for the past 14 years. John Ekberg and I are attaching just a few of the pieces of correspondence that we've received from constituents who live in, and near, district 10, regarding the proposed asphalt batch plant location at Mulford and Charles.

Although Mr. Ekberg and I have no ability to directly vote on this matter we do represent those who live in the 14th Ward and also citizens of Winnebago County Board District 10. Those living in the area have overwhelmingly asked John and I to help voice opposition this variance. I have not received a single correspondence asking me to the contrary.

I know many individuals who are employed by Rockford Blacktop, affiliates and the parent, William Charles. I've always found them and their company to be fair and good corporate citizens. With that being said, I would hope and ask that Rockford Blacktop seek an alternate location and drop its current request for the variance at the Mulford and Charles Street location. I make this recommendation on behalf of the constituents whom John and I represent.

Although this may be a "legal" use of the land, based upon the granting of a variance, the constituents who surround the present quarry have made their case and feel that this is an inappropriate use. They realize that the quarry was there before most of the homes, but they never dreamed that something like an asphalt plant would someday be located there. This area is now predominately residential and a quick review of the WINGIS map indicates that hundreds homes are located within, in some cases, 300 feet of the current facility and they encompass the quarry 360 degrees of the location.

Stated citizen concerns include the large increase in truck traffic and the likelihood, based on comments by Rockford Blacktop representatives, of traffic continuing into the night and on weekends should a likely contract with I-Dot for the I-90 expansion in 2008 come to fruition. They are concerned about air and water quality, as well as increased noise. They are concerned about the increased likelihood of traffic congestion and accidents that additional truck traffic could bring. Homeowners are legitimately concerned about their property values and their ability to sell their home in the future, protecting their life-time investment. They are concerned about the overall quality of life that they have come to expect and enjoy in this residential area, which encompasses several neighborhoods.

Allow me to make a simple analogy. It may be legal for me to paint my house black, but it wouldn't be responsible of me to do so. My black house would not fit well into the existing neighborhood and may deter people from purchasing a home near me. It may result in the devaluation of neighboring homes. I would have alternatives such as moving to an area where painting my black house would not harm the existing area and residents. So, would painting my house black be Legal? Yes. Would it be a responsible thing to do? No. Would placing the asphalt plant in this location be legal? Perhaps. Would it be the responsible thing to do? Probably not. Does the petitioner have alternatives, such as finding a better-suited location? Absolutely.

So, again I would ask that Rockford Blacktop consider alternate locations. Seek a location that would not impact an established residential area, especially one of this size and one that would not impact an already congested area. It may cost more for Rockford Blacktop to locate elsewhere, but the higher cost in loss of good will and respect of company that has been known for their excellent track record of corporate citizenship by such a large audience, causing property devaluation to hundreds of homeowners, and all of the other environmental and esthetical issues that have already been raised would be an acceptable trade-off.

It has been suggested that locating the plant in a different location would drive up the costs to build local roads. Those I have spoken with are willing to "pay more," if it means locating the plant in an alternate location. No one has a crystal ball. This "cost" is an intangible number and there would no way to measure, to the taxpayer, the cost-benefit ratio of new roads if the plant were allowed at the proposed location vs. an alternative location. There would be no way to answer the question, "Are we, the taxpayers, really benefiting by this plant being located here?" And let's keep in mind there are other vendors willing to compete in this marketplace. Economics 101 suggests that competition could lead to lower costs.

As an elected representative and individual who has voted on hundreds of zoning issues I can tell you that it's not government's job to provide a competitive advantage for one company over another at a cost to taxpayers. Would this benefit the community as a whole? That is an unknown, but those living in this area would say no and this is a very large area that is included in the "whole."

One only need drive in the area to see signs protesting this project fanning out well beyond District 10 and Ward 8. The impact will not be limited solely to those who live within eye or earshot, but will affect those who are adjacent to and traveling through the area as well.

If Rockford Blacktop is unwilling to withdraw their request I would ask that the ZBA defeat this request at its November 20th meeting.

Respectfully,

Bob Kinnison, Winnebago County Board – District 10
John Ekberg, Winnebago County Board – District 10
Cc: Rockford City Council Members, Mayor Larry Morrissey