

Anna Wynn

From: Elizabeth Burdick
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 6:48 PM
To: Anna Wynn
Subject: FW: D. Snowberger Public Comment in Opposition

Anna, Please save this email as a public comment exhibit. Thank you.

Regards,

Liz Burdick

Director of Land Use & Planning
Town of Ledyard
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TOWN HALL HOURS: MON-THURS, 7:30AM – 4:45PM

From: Dwight Snowberger <dwight.snowberger@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 4:51 PM
To: Elizabeth Burdick <planner@ledyardct.org>; Anna Wynn <land.use.asst@ledyardct.org>; Hannah Gienau <zoning.official@ledyardct.org>
Subject: D. Snowberger Public Comment in Opposition

Ms Burdick

Please see the following as my public comment in opposition to the GFI proposal to quarry Mt Decatur.

Thank you for the opportunity to allow my voice to be heard.

Dwight Snowberger
16 Robinhood Drive
Gales Ferry, CT 06335
12/3/2024

I would like to provide my public statement of opposition to the proposed quarry at the Allyn Point site operated by Gales Ferry Intermodal (GFI) based on the following three categories: History, Health, and Economic Development.

History:

In 2012, I had the privilege of visiting Ft. Decatur, when Dow Chemical decided to allow the public to visit the fort via guided tours. These tours were a part of nationwide marking of the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812 and to raise public awareness of what can be called America's Second War for Independence. Many residents of this town and surrounding area took advantage of this historic opportunity. Touring this fort and stepping in the footsteps of Stephen Decatur and the soldiers who built and used Fort Decatur, made me feel a great sense of awe and connection to our town's/nation's past. The most important part about being at a fort or battlefield is seeing the land and the context that these events took place. One's imagination can only go so far in this regard but for Fort Decatur it is important to see the whole mountain that this fort was built on and to see the approaches from all sides and place yourself in the shoes of the fort's defenders in determining the structure's shape and

fortification type. Fort Decatur is not just the stones and trenches, but it is the actual mountain it rests upon that allows the story of this National Treasure to be told.

Health:

“Fugitive Dust”, a real concern for this and any quarry has been addressed by GFI presentations as not as dangerous as exhaust from operating equipment of normal quarries. Dust is a real factor, especially the silica dust that will be released into the environment at this site. I find it hard to believe that GFI’s wind/dust assessment guarantees that the dust would not leave the quarry site based on personal experiences of the people who live near quarries and the video presentations of a typical blasting at the Baldwin Hill site. The concerns that this harmful dust producing quarry is right in the middle of town has been raised by many and the very close proximity to three schools, a daycare, and hundreds of residents within the 1-mile buffer zone, including myself should be used by the Board as a means of disapproval of the quarry application.

Economic Development:

Looking at some of the renderings provided by GFI for what the site might look like after the quarry has pillaged the stone from the mountain, does not seem to outweigh the cost (natural beauty, property values, historical character, or health risks). These renderings showed some buildings but mostly parking lots, and solar panels. Or a possible warehouse has also been suggested. Justifying the quarry operation in “hopes” of using the 40 acres for a “potential” partnership with the wind energy business that might not even be in New London in 10 yrs (might end up all in Bridgeport or other ports along the CT shoreline per the Sunday Day article from 9/22/24) is all a big risk and very wishful thinking, with the town having way more to permanently lose than to gain.

Finally, the perception that Gales Ferry citizens are opposed to economic development are untrue. I would like to see a responsible balance in development that is in harmony with the character of our small town. Development that sacrifices our natural beauty, historic character, and the health of our citizens is not development we need/want. When Dow Chemical operated the site we had that balance. Gales Ferry can keep its charm and develop economically by expanding on its cultural assets such as creating a trail system on the mountain that would lead to Fort Decatur and create a park environment to tell the fort’s story and provide a context to visitors of the fort’s place in the surrounding landscape as well as views up and down the river. Also, Gales Ferry is home to the world’s oldest collegiate sporting event, the Yale/Harvard rowing regatta. While this event happens once a year there are plenty of other towns that thrive on exploiting a once-a-year event (examples, Salem, MA with Halloween, and Punxsutawney, PA with Groundhog Day). Gales Ferry could be poised to be a rowing capital and develop an identity around the sport. Either of these things would be greatly diminished by having an active quarry in the middle of the town producing excessive noise, harmful dust, and congestive truck traffic.

Recommendation:

My recommendation for the site would be for GFI to use the existing Allyn Point site in its current footprint with no excavation of the mountain. Any remaining industrial zoned land on Mt Decatur be donated for the purpose of preserving the historical context that Ft. Decatur and the site of the fort as outlined by EX45 24-8SUP-9CAM StefonDanczuk PubComment 091024, specifically their recommendation of “We think the best method of proper preservation for the site is a land donation to a steward of archaeological sites that will work to protect the site in perpetuity”. When it comes to history and trying to make a connection to the past, the land itself is a very big part of telling that story and must be preserved.