

Ryan O'Connell
8 Winthrop Road
Gales Ferry, CT 06335

December 12, 2024

Town of Ledyard Planning and Zoning Commission

Attn: Ms. Elizabeth Burdick, Director of Planning
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339

**Subject: Opposition to Applications PZ#24-8SUP and PZ#24-9CAM for Special Use Permit
“Excavation Major” at 1737 and 1761 Connecticut Route 12, Gales Ferry Intermodal, LLC**

Dear Ms. Burdick and Commissioners:

I have lived in Gales Ferry nearly all my life. I attended preschool at the United Methodist Church on Chapman Lane and am a proud graduate of Ledyard Public Schools, returning to the area after college to buy a home in Gales Ferry Village. As a homeowner, I value the area’s residential character, strong community, and historic and coastal attributes—qualities that I looked for in the homebuying process and that I seek to preserve here in my hometown.

Pertinent Regulations:

The Town of Ledyard Zoning Regulations¹ and Special Permit Criteria are clear in their intent to protect residents and the environment:

- Section 1.3 Purpose: Emphasizes the need to “secure safety from fire, panic, flood and other dangers” and “promote health and the general welfare.”
- Section 8.16(d2): Excavation work must “not be a source of dust pollution or siltation.”
- Section 11.3.4(c): Activities must not be “noxious, offensive, or detrimental to the area by reason of odors, fumes, dust, noise, vibrations, appearance, or other similar reasons.”

Adverse Impacts of the Proposed Plan:

The Applicant’s July 8, 2024 Narrative² acknowledges the inherent usage limitations of their property, which include environmental restrictions, existing industrial use, Allyn’s Pond, site remediation, and power line easement challenges. To address these, the Applicant brazenly proposes removing a 40-acre, 256-foot-high forested granite mountain through a major quarrying blasting operation (while attempting to preserve a mere 3 acres of the Fort Decatur historic site with limited access) only to gain 26 acres of level land.

This operation raises significant concerns:

- **Dust, Noise, and Vibration:** The Applicant Narrative, Construction Activities, paragraph 17, claims that operations will not cause “objectionable impacts.” Quarry blasting is known to produce substantial environmental and health risks, including fugitive dust (silica), noise

¹ Town of Ledyard Zoning Regulations. Effective October 11, 1963. Amended through January 2, 2024.

² Exhibit 1-4 Gales Ferry Intermodal, LLC Narrative. Document dated July 8, 2024.

pollution, and intense vibrations. These risks threaten the health and quality of life of Gales Ferry residents, particularly families, schools, and playgrounds nearby.

- **Long-Term Health Risks:** Health effects from quarry operations, including respiratory and silica-related illnesses, may not manifest for years, but can have lasting generational impacts.
- **Minimal Economic Benefit:** The proposed operation would span 7-10 years with negligible economic or employment gains for Ledyard or the state. These gains are far outweighed by the health and environmental risks.
- **Property Value Decline:** Research and precedent show that quarry operations diminish property values and deter buyers, undermining the residential integrity of our community.

Concerns with Blast Claim Procedures:

The Applicant's October 8, 2024 document, *Damage Complaint Procedures*, by Maine Drilling and Blasting (MDB)³, lacks transparency and accountability. It limits complaint resolution to MDB, the property owner, and their insurer, with no requirement to report incidents to Gales Ferry Intermodal, LLC, local officials, or regulatory bodies. This omission raises serious concerns about oversight and enforcement.

To ensure accountability, incident reporting should adhere to applicable local, state, and federal regulations. MDB should disclose to the Ledyard Planning and Zoning Board Commission the number and outcomes of past blast claims at other operations as highly pertinent information for Ledyard Planning and Zoning risk assessment.

Case Studies and Precedents:

- *Journal of Environmental Law & Policy* (December 2022) – “Quarry Operations: Land Use Compatibility Issues and Potential Property Value Impacts”⁴: This study highlights the significant negative impacts of improperly located quarry operations near residential areas. These include substantial levels of particulate matter, dust, fly rock, and noise pollution. The experience of intense vibrations—whether felt through the air or ground—creates a considerable nuisance, disrupts quality of life, and can be especially distressing for individuals with mental health conditions like PTSD. This constitutes an infringement on property owners' rights to enjoy their homes.

Additionally, the study notes further harm in the form of reduced property values and limited buyer interest, both linked to aggregate extraction activities and blasting operations. With over 200 supporting footnote references, I strongly recommend that the Ledyard Planning and Zoning Commission review this document.

- *Baltimore Post-Examiner* (July 10, 2024)⁵: Documents the challenges of enforcing permit compliance, citing a Maryland quarry that continued operations during appeals despite documented violations of dust control, damage monitoring, community protections, and alleged non-compliance with local, state, and federal laws.

³ Exhibit 104-1 Maine Drilling & Blasting, INC. – *Damage Complaint Procedures*. Document dated October 8, 2024.

⁴ December 2022 *Journal of Environmental Law & Policy* 02(03): 1-78, Research paper titled, “Quarry Operations: Land Use Compatibility Issues and Potential Property Value Impacts”.

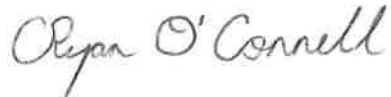
⁵ *Baltimore Post-Examiner* article titled, “Quarry Blasts Continue Despite Resident Complaints.” Dated July 10, 2024. Written by Glynis Kazanjian, <https://www.guilfordgazette.com/2024/07/10/quarry-blasts-continue-despite-resident-complaints/>

Conclusion:

For these reasons—health risks, environmental harm, diminished property values, and insufficient oversight—I strongly urge the Commission to deny Applications PZ#24-8SUP and PZ#24-9CAM. The proposed excavation is incompatible with the surrounding residential area and poses unacceptable risks to my family's—and our community's—health, safety, quality of life, and enjoyment of property.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ryan O'Connell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Ryan O'Connell
860-912-4240