

Liberty Quarry hearings moved to Temecula

10:00 PM PST on Monday, January 24, 2011

By JEFF HORSEMAN
The Press-Enterprise

Opponents of the proposed Liberty Quarry are praising the decision to move the Riverside County Planning Commission hearings on the project from Riverside to Temecula, saying the new location is more convenient for the public.

The public hearings are now scheduled for 4 p.m. April 27 and May 4 at Rancho Community Church, 31300 Rancho Community Way off Temecula Parkway. The church is one of Temecula's largest and holds about 1,400 people.

The plan to build a 414-acre open-pit mine in the hills south of Temecula is one of the most controversial projects ever proposed for the Temecula Valley. Quarry developer Granite Construction said the quarry will be an economic asset, but critics fear it could lead to air pollution and environmental ruin.

The hearings were originally set for 3 p.m. at the Riverside Convention Center, almost an hour away from Temecula. Behind-the-scenes maneuvering involving Temecula Councilwoman Maryann Edwards resulted in the location change, which was announced in a county news release Saturday.

Edwards, a church member, said the closed Stater Bros. market on Jefferson Avenue and area high schools also were looked at. Schools were ruled out because of after-school activities during the week, she said.

"I think it's vital that residents who are living near the proposed project have a venue where they can express their concerns," said Edwards, a quarry opponent. "Having to go to Riverside ... is not convenient for those who would be most impacted by the project."

Jerri Arganda, a Rainbow resident and member of the anti-quarry group Save Our Southwest Hills, said attendance at the hearings will likely double now that they're set for Temecula. The 4 p.m. start is more convenient for working families, she said.

Granite spokeswoman Karie Reuther said her company is fine with moving the hearings.

"Wherever the county wants to hold the hearings, we're happy to show up," she said.

The project will be reviewed by the commission before heading to the Board of Supervisors for a final vote.

Reach Jeff Horseman at 951-375-3727 or jhorseman@PE.com

QUARRY HEARINGS

WHAT: The Riverside County Planning Commission will hold at least two public hearings on the proposed Liberty Quarry.

WHEN: 4 p.m. April 27 and May 4

WHERE: Rancho Community Church, 31300 Rancho Community Way, Temecula
