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Senate of Pennsylvania

February 12, 2020

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Raphael M. Barishansky
Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Health
Health and Welfare Building, 8th Floor West
625 Forster Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Rockhill Quarry, East Rockhill Township

Dear Deputy Secretary Barishansky,

As you may be aware, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (the DEP) ordered mining operations at the Rockhill Quarry in East Rockhill Township (the Quarry) to be ceased on December 5, 2018, due to the discovery of naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) at the site.¹ Since that time, my office has been in regular communication with the DEP expressing our concerns that the asbestos, if disturbed, would cause harm to the area's residents. Earlier this week, we received your letter of February 7, 2020 addressed to the Rockhill Environmental Preservation Alliance, Inc. (REPA) regarding this issue. I am writing now in response.

Your letter made it clear that resuming operations at the Quarry would put East Rockhill residents, especially children, at immediate risk. Specifically, you stated that NOA at the site "should be avoided and left alone" and that it would be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of residents were it to be disturbed in any way. Toward that end, you offered the owners/operators of the site the following guidance regarding NOA:

"Avoid blasting it, crushing it, or grinding it up...Especially avoid digging, transporting and/or gardening in areas in which NOA has been detected or suspected to be present. Avoid riding bikes on unpaved surfaces. Avoid riding off-road vehicles such as four-wheelers and dirt bikes in areas with NOA. Also, limit running, hiking, or driving on unpaved surfaces in these areas."

¹ It is the only quarry in Pennsylvania with NOA that is also located in a residential area.

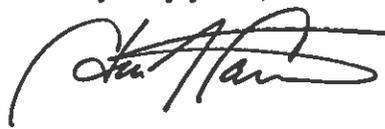
If the mere riding of a bicycle on the surface of the site would pose a risk to human health, how could anyone reasonably argue that operating an active quarry there should be allowed?

In short, the continued operation of the Quarry would endanger public health and safety. Moreover, no precautions could be taken to change that fact. Like the Chevrolet Corvair, which consumer advocate Ralph Nader famously described as "unsafe at any speed" in a book by that title, the presence of NOA at the site makes quarrying operations there an inherently unsafe activity. In light of that fact, the Commonwealth should permanently prohibit the owners/operators of the site from conducting any further mining-related activities at the Quarry.

I would like to invite you, Secretary Levine, Secretary McDonnell, and any other staff in his department that he deems appropriate, to my office in Harrisburg for a meeting on this issue. My office will work to schedule the meeting for a date and time that are convenient for all.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,



Steven J. Santarsiero
PA Senator, District 10

CC: The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick, Member of Congress
The Honorable Bob Mensch, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Craig T. Staats, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Dr. Rachel L. Levine, PA DOH, Secretary
The Honorable Patrick McDonnell, PA DEP, Secretary
Michael Brunelle, Office of the Governor, Chief of Staff
Will Danowski, Office of the Governor, Secretary of Legislative Affairs
Marianne Morano, East Rockhill Township, Manager
Patrick Patterson, PA DEP, Southeast Regional Director
Robert Fogel, PA DEP, Southeast Region Local Government Liaison
Katie Zackon, Rockhill Environmental Preservation Alliance