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JAN 31 2020

21074 480th Avenue
White, SD 57276

BROOKINGS
COUNTY DEVELOPMENT

26 January 2020

Mike Bartley
Brookings County Commissioner

Dear Mr. Bartley,

During this past Tuesday evening at the Planning and Zoning Board public meeting I was one of the attendees and speakers. My particular interest that evening was in league with that of most of the other citizens regarding 2020cu001 and 2020cu002, that is, the application for a conditional use permit to establish a gravel and sand quarry, and associated product hauling plans on county and township roads, with an anticipated 30 year life. During the course of that meeting I was both pleased and disappointed with certain behaviors of members of the Board regarding the above issue.

As you may recall there were a number of salient issues presented by WE THE PEOPLE that were overlooked or deliberately ignored by the permit applicant. It was also evident that most members of the Board that remained silent implicitly supported the application when they either did not display any understanding, or did not care, or were unwilling to explore any aspects of the issues. These Board members clearly shirked their responsibilities. It was also quite evident that the new chairperson of the Board was prejudiced in favor of the applicant.

The only serious interrogation of the issues pertaining to the permit application was from you. I thank you for your interest in the fiscal issues and to request clear and thorough planning and budgeting from the applicant. You kept your questions focused on the failure of the applicant to supply important cost estimates and options regarding siting of an access road to the proposed quarry and the use and repair of publicly funded county and township roads. This is a most important issue that must be resolved. Is the county serious about subsidizing a private business venture with extraordinary road building, repairs, and maintenance costs? Where is the positive gain to the public if the cost/benefit ratios are negative to the public purse? Where is the fiscal responsibility of the county? Already, it was stated that the county expenses for road repair and maintenance are beyond budgets. I know for a fact that some of those excessive expenditures during the past two calendar years were for repairs to township roads and culvert crossings of streams in Alton Township and neighboring townships that are intended for use in heavy hauling. In some cases, the same roads and culverts were repaired at least twice in the last two years because of faulty design and prior repair consistent with faulty road and crossing policies during times of catastrophic high rainfall periods. It seems evident

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that the officials of Brookings County lack the capacity and will to plan for catastrophic weather conditions, especially on any long-term basis. As I repeatedly stated in my testimony, the roads at present lack the structural integrity to provide safe and cost efficient use as proposed by the applicant. I note that nobody challenged this fact and it was acknowledged by the permit applicant, you, and seemingly all others present at the meeting.

Most other Board members remained quiet, possibly because the number of people in the audience was larger than normal and seemingly befuddled the majority senior, male, Caucasian, and [selective] business-biased members. Why they had no questions was curious, but possibly these Board members lacked familiarity, were disinterested, or tacitly supported the faulty application without declaring their conflicts of interest. It appears that the present composition and policies of local government lacks responsiveness to modern demographics and interests of its citizenry.

Ms. Elenkiwich was aggressively and bullyingly dismissive of those of us testifying, and summarized in part our concerns in petulant tones and words, and falsely accused us of being NIMBY (not in my backyard) oppositionists. In this regard Ms. Elenkiwich mischaracterized our concerns regarding health and safety matters in which the county could become liable, at least in part. In this regard, Ms. Elenkiwich is clearly demagogic and not concerned about the impact of a private business venture on the valid and prior interests of businesses and landowners already present for many years along the proposed hauling roads. The current residents potentially impacted by the hauling plan are the economic and environmental basis for the entire township.

In fact, none of us that testified said anything indicating opposition to the proposed quarry. All stated oppositions and concerns related specifically to the hauling plans and the excessive costs and misuse of public roadways, particularly those township roads that currently lack capacity and capability of supporting the planned truck traffic and weights.

It appears that Ms. Elenkiwich is not at all concerned with the excessive costs that would be incurred by the county or the improper public subsidy of a singular private business venture. Why she was so defensive of the application under discussion remains unexplained. However, as I understand relationships on the Board, it appears evident that Ms. Elenkiwich has an undeclared personal conflict of interest in the proposed business venture that causes her to dismiss public concerns and potentially excessive public expenditures by the county. Regardless, then she is obligated toward transparency and ethical governance, and explain why she puts the business interests of the applicant against the greater good of the community. Clearly, based on actions and words, Ms. Elenkiwich is not interested in the public good, nor in the legitimate interests of other businesses, landowners, homeowners, families, or quality of life by anyone other than her own. She showed reckless,

insulting, dismissive, and callous disregard for the interests of the people of eastern Brookings County.

As you may surmise, I lack confidence in the demeanor and decision making capabilities of Ms. Elenkiwich as someone ostensibly working on behalf of the citizenry. If she is unable to maintain an objective evaluation of this and other applications to the Board, cannot place aside her friendship with the applicant, and restrain from adolescent declarations that aggravate and inflame the citizenry, then she must muster the maturity to recuse herself from deliberations. Possibly, she should be censured. Her blatant failure to declare a conflict of interest seems adequate to remove her from the Board, if not also violations of governance rules in South Dakota. This is a stain on local governance in Brookings County.

In summary, the essential aspects of this issue are that there is every expectation that the county will be liable for extra-ordinary budgetary liabilities and that the citizens of Brookings County are being ill-served by potential corruption on the Planning and Zoning Board.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Johnson

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