

Letter To The Editor

Ona Mine Will Be Bad Long-Term For Hardee

Dear Editor:

July 10 was a deplorable day for Hardee County when Commissioners unanimously approved another 23,000 acres to be mined and altered forever.

This was another blow to the future of the county and the citizens who live in it.

I attended the hearing which included the rezoning and permitting of the massive Ona mine, alternative setbacks, rezone of two other sections of older mines as well as the land development and economic development agreements ... an incredibly immense agenda.

The citizen turnout was meager. Was it the result of hopelessness, fear or apathy? There were some of us from Hardee county as well as other counties impacted by mining that took their allotted three minutes to raise questions that they felt were left unanswered by the highly polished industry presentation.

Questions about noise, dust, light, traffic, mining through creeks, toxic reagents, water contamination, self-monitoring, possible breaches, long-term health effects, devaluation of property values, etc., as much as the three minutes would allow.

The County Commission laid the blame on past commissioners who approved mining years ago. And as Commissioner Thompson commented, "Things change." These were decisions made many years ago.

THIS was a decision for the

Ona mine up for rezone and permitting NOW. Not in the past! Not by other commissioners! Not by the landowners who sold their land!

The land was zoned agriculture when purchased. Commissioner Birge stated, "The train left the station years ago" and that they "can't control the train now!" If the commission can't control the industrial plague that is spreading through the county, who can?

Might as well have those Mosaic suits in the commission chairs and call it Mosaic County. They have their name is on everything anyway. The responsibility of this permitting rests squarely on the shoulders of Commissioner Sue Birge, Colon Lambert, Russell Melendy, Rick Knight and Mike Thompson.

Mining has been going on for decades in Hardee County. What are the benefits to the average county resident? No wonder people are leaving this county.

Bill Lambert was interviewed by the Charlotte Sun on July 22. He stated that agricultural activity of mined lands are greatly reduced even after reclamation and that somebody needs to look at the productivity of pre-mining and post-mining lands.

You would have thought this should have already been done prior to another mass permitting. And "Don't wait until mining is done and have a knee-jerk reaction and say, Oh, what have we done?" Lambert

warned. Exactly, what have we done?

The only sign of strength and guts came from Ralf Arce of the Planning and Zoning Board.

He was the only one to vote against approval of the Ona mine as proposed. He was concerned about the future for the residents and the 30-year hands-off commitment by the county. He told the commissioners that they had the power to change things.

If only they had had the courage to do so.

Nancy Armstrong
Ona
