

## WEC UPDATE - 24 August 2006

It has been a month since the July 25th hearing before the Board of Appeals concerning the proposal to strip mine the property at Mill Run Farm in Welcome.

Let's recap for a moment.

Bolton and Associates prepared a Special Exception Report, which was submitted to the county on March 1 on behalf of Facchina Development LLC, to surface mine the property we know as Mill Run Horse Farm. On May 9, Planning and Growth Management submitted their report to the Board of Appeals concerning the Special Exception request. The Board of Appeals scheduled a public hearing for May 23. Public notice consisted of posting a sign on the property 14 days in advance, and two boilerplate legal notices in the newspaper. A small group of concerned Welcome residents worked hard to get word out to the public about the issue and about the hearing. At that hearing, citizens requested a 120-day extension in order to better prepare for the hearing. An extension of only 60 days was granted, and a new hearing was scheduled for July 25.

WEC was formed and its members worked hard to raise funds by such things as yard and bake sales, and individual donations. An attorney was hired and a plan was formed to counter the proposed strip mine. Again, WEC worked hard to get word of the issue and the hearing out to the public. After considerable work and expense, WEC was prepared to present its case to the Board. Sensing the strong public opposition to the proposed strip mine, the day of the hearing the Applicant's attorney informed WEC's attorney that they were going to request a 120-day extension, and if that was denied, they were going to withdraw the application with the intention of submitting it at a later date.

At the July 25 hearing, Facchina's attorney, Mr. Mudd, requested a 120-day extension. The request was denied, and at that point Mr. Mudd withdrew the application for a special exemption. Some who were unaware of the complete picture thought that this was a victory for WEC (and in some sense it was) and that the fight was over. IT IS NOT.

In explaining the reason for the Applicant's request for a 120-day extension at the July 25 hearing, Mr. Mudd represented that Mr. Facchina wanted to meet with concerned residents. On behalf of WEC, Dennis Sullivan met with Mr. Paul Facchina Sr., his son Paul Jr. and Charles MacPherson at their offices in La Plata. The meeting was cordial, but not overly friendly. Paul Sr. did most of the talking. Dennis did not argue, debate or negotiate with him. Dennis pointed out that the Bolton Report would allow his operation to result in an operation that could resemble the existing mine site at Coldspring (in Welcome, about a mile west of Mill Run). Dennis has a picture of that site, and it is a blight.

The outcome of the meeting was that Facchina Development intends to proceed. They are planning to rewrite the Special Exception Report.

Dennis asked when they would resubmit, but did not get a definitive answer.

It is important that we understand that there is considerable work yet to be done.

IT IS NOT OVER.

Dennis Sullivan