

County of Santa Clara

California

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May 12, 1972

To: County Counsel

From: Donald M. Rains, Clerk of the Board

Transcript of tape from Board of Supervisors meeting of May 10, 1972 relating to Item #15 - Various Communications re Quarrying Operation and Rehabilitation of Area - Permanente Cement Operation

Mr. Hoffman: I am Ralph Hoffman, General Production Manager of Kaiser Cement and Gypsum Corporation. I am here today to review at your request my company's plans for the operation of its quarry at Permanente. We have done this in the past, as you are aware, and we are pleased to do so today.

In 1966 several discussions were held covering Permanente's plans for mining which were, in effect, to alter the ridgeline or skyline, as you read from the Los Altos - Los Altos Hills area, by lowering the elevation of the skyline some one hundred to one hundred fifty feet or a linear distance of approximately twelve hundred feet. This was outlined in a letter from our company to Assistant County Counsel in March of 1967 and it was indicated that the skyline alteration would take place over a three to four year period. This has been done and I would like to illustrate this by showing you several slides. The first of these slides shows the skyline ridge as seen from the Los Altos - Los Altos Hills area ...

Mr. Quinn: Excuse me, Mr. Hoffman. Is there anyone in the back who cannot hear Mr. Hoffman? Thank you, Mr. Hoffman.

Mr. Hoffman: This picture was taken in 1965 prior to our initial mining operation that was outlined in 1966. May I have the next slide, please? This picture was taken within the last two weeks showing the ridge line that was taken from the same location and this is as it is today. We have another slide which I would like to

show you which shows the two of them; the original on top and as it is today on the bottom. As you can see, the 1966 plan was followed very closely. We have recently completed exploratory drawing and geologic exploration which confirms the necessity of our every inter-mine program similar to that which we completed in 1971. It is our intent to alter the appearance of the skyline by reducing the elevation of it one hundred feet at the maximum or a linear distance of approximately one thousand feet. An additional seven hundred lineal feet would be altered from zero to one hundred feet. The elevation change caused by this mining plan will (1) leave a skyline elevation above sea level of fifteen hundred feet or greater at the completion of mining in the affected area (2) it will leave a skyline view for the Los Altos-Los Altos Hills residents, not an open view of the quarry operation. We at Permanente are well aware of the concern of the residents of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills as it pertains to the so-called threat or trauma over the possibility of having an open pit quarry to view. Over the past several years we have done everything possible to minimize the view of any equipment from the Los Altos area as we operated within our pit. As you saw in the slides, it is a skyline view. (3) This plan will be completed within the next two to three years. (4) It will not add to the open view as seen from other areas of the county. (5) It will be the last such operation to the skyline as a result of our mining operation. Again, I would like to show some slides.

This is the skyline view as seen from Los Altos today. At the completion of our program - we have another slide which is an artist's attempt, based upon topographical and elevation information, to show you what it will look like three to four years from now. As I previously stated, the view will remain a skyline view from Los Altos. Again, the upper view is today, the lower view is what we expect it to look like three or four years hence.

I also know that you are concerned about the appearance of our quarry as it is viewed from areas other than Los Altos Hills and I would like now to comment about that. The extraction of limestone from our deposit by the open pit method necessarily means that it is progressive with time. By this I mean that though we have been quarrying from this deposit since 1939 it has only been within the last several years that the finest extraction of limestone has been accomplished in the upper areas of the pit, which is the primary area viewed from the Cupertino, Sunnyvale and Saratoga areas. Limestone pit mining operations are such that

you sort of start in the center and work to the perimeter of an inverted bowl, much like a funnel shape. As I stated, it has just been in the last several years that from the elevations of 1850 feet down to approximately 1550 feet we have extracted the limestone back to what we call "footwall", which is material which is unsuitable for the manufacture of cement. Therefore, this land is now in the position where we can begin plans for reclamation. We have in the past voluntarily engaged in planting areas in which no further activity was planned. May I have the next slide, please?

This photo was taken from Highway 9 midway between Cupertino and Saratoga and, as you can see, you have the view of the open pit. It is the uppermost couple of hundred feet of this backside of the pit which has been mined to the last point. This brings it down to an elevation of about 1550 feet and I should point out that to get to the point where mining operations are no longer safe it will take us another four to six years, going from 1550 feet down to about 1250 feet. That's at approximately the 1250 foot elevation where the dark natural mountain in the front in the foreground blocks out the view from the lower areas. So, as I said, we have planted voluntarily in the past. As recently as last fall we began to experiment with hydro-mulching. (It's the light part to the righthand side of the slide.) It's a little difficult to discern but that represents the waste belt which is permanent and we have no further activity and this has been planted with hydro-mulch material. Unfortunately, there has been extremely dry weather and we have not seen much growth from this. (Thanks, Vic.)

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We are currently working with landscape consultants to develop an appropriate plan for reclamation of this upper face area which you were just viewing. You are, I am sure, well aware of the impending legislation that best defines state levels having to do with quarry operations and reclamation plans and we expect to be in a position to comply through our present planning efforts. The anticipated life of the Permanente quarry is in excess of twenty years and it is my company's intention to operate a cement manufacturing plant at Permanente through the exhaustion of its limestone deposit.

In closing, I would like to reiterate two points. We are developing reclamation plans for the quarry and the alteration of the skyline, as proposed, will be the last one necessary for our operation. Thank you.

Mr. Quinn: Do you have any questions of Mr. Hoffman?

Mr. Calvo: Yes. Mr. Hoffman, taking first the ridgeline situation. Where are you now? Which elevation? You stated that you had gone on record stating that you would not go below 1500 feet in the area in question.

Mr. Hoffman: (Answer is inaudible.)

Mr. Calvo: So you would go on record as saying 100 feet would be the ultimate ...

Hoffman: Right.

Mr. Calvo: If that should be agreeable to all parties concerned then that would become part of an agreement in writing and enforceable, I would hope, to counties policing out of the elevation. As to the quarry, you talk about developing plans. I have heard this for some time. We haven't had any real progress to my knowledge. I would want to see you adhere to a schedule, not only agreeing, basically, to our quarrying standards, which are rather restrictive, but also to a rehabilitation plan, which would have been required of you had you started a quarry after our laws became effective. Just to say that we should expect from you some planting and a treatment of the open pit quarry, I don't think is enough. At this time, I think what we want, really, is a commitment that within x number of years you will have that rehabilitated - that you will put in plantings. I wish you could - you can still see the standards we have developed for another quarry at the other end of the county. I think that's the type of agreement we are looking for; one that will bring that area back up so that it is not offensive to residents of this county. Certainly, I think that's the least we can expect; a quarrying plan on schedule, a complete rehabilitation of the area as well as a commitment to the ridgeline elevation. That's all I have at this point.

Mr. Quinn: Do you have landscape architects doing this work? Do they have plans as you progress along that could be furnished to the county?

Hoffman: We are not yet at the point of having a piece of paper but I am sure that we would be quite willing to discuss with the county as we accumulate this information of what it is we plan to do.

Mr. Quinn: I think this would be an area that we would be interested in. Do you have any further questions of Mr. Hoffman?

Mr. Mehrkens: I would like to ask a question of Mr. Hoffman.  
These benches that you refer to - are they 200 feet  
at levels or are they closer than that?

Hoffman: The normal bench level in the perimeter of the pit  
is fifty feet.

Mr. Mehrkens: Fifty feet - are any of them in a position where  
they could be rehabilitated by planting at this  
time?

Hoffman: This is one of the areas under study at the present  
time, Mr. Mehrkens.

Mr. Mehrkens: Thank you.

Mr. Quinn: Thank you, Mr. Hoffman.

Hoffman: Thank you.