

One of these things is not like the others...



An open letter from Gary, Linda & 9,339 Friends of East Flat Rock

To Our Community: We, a growing coalition of over 9,339 local citizens, community members, and homeowners, oppose the rezoning of “community commercial” zoned property near many homes in order to build an industrial Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) plant. While we recognize the importance of business development and commercial growth as a path to planned community improvement, we strongly oppose the attempt to override the planned East Flat Rock (EFR) community land use.

We provide for your consideration counterpoints to the recent community communication from SE Asphalt’s owners (Jeff, Harper, Billie Shipman) July 15-21.

- **REGULATIONS** – While the North Carolina Dept. of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) regulates HMA plants, the “inspection process” is largely a paper-review of production reporting, maintenance logs, and a simple visual inspection one day a year. After commissioning, emissions are *almost never measured*.
- **VOCs** – Mr. Shipman’s statement that modern HMA plants emit in one year only the same amount of volatile organic compounds (VOC’s) that two residential fireplaces emit is misleading. The Carolina Asphalt Pavement Association’s (CAPA) November 2019 document actually states 20 fireplaces. Evaluation of this statement by the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) states that the reality is 100’s or 1000’s of wood stoves.
- **OPERATING DAYS** – NCDEQ permitted HMA production facilities may operate any time. Commercial need and profit interest will encourage operations whenever its warm enough. That’s just business and how you pay for the equipment investment.
- **“LATEST” EQUIPMENT** – The proposed equipment, a counter-flow drum system, is the “latest” design, but has been common since the late 1980’s (30 years) and is much the same as other HMA plants in the region. As described by an ASTEC representative at an SE Asphalt hosted meeting on 7/23/20 the equipment will have some noise mitigation features, but will not continuously monitor emissions and isn’t currently planned to use ASTEC’s standard control systems. Operator eyeballs do not reflect a “latest technology” approach to monitor the exhaust and detect emissions problems.
- **JOBS** – The plant will directly create 4-6 jobs: a plant operator/supervisor, mobile equipment operators, and maintenance staff. Jobs such as truck drivers and paving crews will depend on the market and their price competitiveness. There are 3 local HMA plants (APAC, Rogers, and Tarheel) and plants in Asheville, Tryon, and Travelers Rest. The combined total capacity of the Henderson County plants is 950,000 tons of HMA, but they only sell about 250,000 tons per year. Based on an apparent glut of HMA in our area, it’s not obvious if the other 12-14 jobs claimed will be created or just moved.
- **BEAUTY** – We seriously doubt the plant will be “invisible” to the surrounding areas. East Flat Rock is the gateway to Hendersonville for many.
- **SUSTAINABILITY** – There is nothing remotely sustainable about exhausting toxic air pollutants, tons of airborne microscopic particulate annually, and burning large quantities of fossil fuels that create carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxides, and nitrogen oxides in the EFR community. The owners are simply asking for permission to pollute EFR and surrounding areas at a low enough level that people won’t object.
- **WATER** – The NCDEQ water quality division requires a storm water management system to control polluted runoff from the facility. In the event of a fire accident, 30,000 gallons of hot bitumen (tar), fuel oil, or diesel fuel could burn creating highly toxic smoke and polluted water runoff. There have been over 10 explosions or fires at asphalt plants across the US in 2019/2020, including a massive fire in Statesville, NC in August, 2019 ... it does happen.

As residents and citizens of the Henderson County community, we support planned development and endorse the East Flat Rock Community Plan. That plan designates the land as Community Commercial and does not support rezoning for use as an Industrial Hot Mix Asphalt plant among our residences, churches, schools, and existing businesses. We strongly encourage the Henderson County Planning Commission and Commissioners to deny the application for Conditional Zoning and we encourage the communities of Henderson County to voice their support of our position by contacting the county Planning Board and the Commissioners by phone, letter, and email. **For more information, visit FriendsOfEastFlatRock.org.**

Respectfully,

Gary Steinberg, LC MIES, System Manager – *Outdoor LED Fixtures, GE Current*

Linda McKinnish Bridges, *former president Baptist Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia*

Friends of East Flat Rock