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Quarry opponents must give up fight if they can't pay for tape transcripts

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Opponents of a controversial rock quarry in Jessup will be forced to end a two-year fight if they can't raise \$10,000 to pay tape-transcribing fees in the next week.

A Nov. 21 deadline to pay for transcripts of testimony before the Howard County Board of Appeals was imposed by Howard County Circuit Judge Diane O. Leasure.

The opponents appealed an April ruling by the Board of Appeals -- in which the quarry was approved -- to the circuit court, but the transcripts are needed before the appeal can proceed.

"It's problematic," said attorney David A. Carney, who represents several of the opponents. "They do not have enough money to do it."

In one of the appeals, Carney was accused of a conflict of interest by one of the opponents, Rosemary Ford, because Carney's fees were paid by an unidentified third party. Ford claimed that the third party could have an interest in the quarry.

However, Leasure ruled the circuit court is not the proper place for such a claim and said she would not consider it.

As soon as the court saga ends, the quarry owner -- Kingdon Gould Jr., a North Laurel resident and a Washington parking lot magnate -- is expected to start seeking the necessary state environmental permits, a process likely to take two years.

After Gould receives the permits, mining probably would not start for another two years, according to his attorney. Gould declined to comment.

The quarry should yield 1 million to 2 million tons of rock a year for 25 years.

Residents worry that mining will dramatically change the character of their neighborhoods, increase truck traffic and noise and depress property values.

"The only thing I can do is hope and pray that they are right," opponent Russell Olson said of the quarry's supporters, who have contended that the operation will not hurt property values or damage the neighborhoods. "If they're wrong, we're all in the same boat together."

Ford said she was disappointed but couldn't afford the tape-transcribing fees.

"I was barely able to put my stuff together," Ford said, referring to efforts to represent herself. "I guess that's what happens in our legal system."

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