

Huge Crowd Opposes Mine in Union Co.

February 16, 2016



Further actions by citizens can take place Thursday in Starke when the Bradford County commissioners meet in the county courthouse, 945 North Temple Ave. at 6:30 pm.

Standing room only in the small quarters used by the Union Co. commissioners to entertain questions and concerns regarding the impending phosphate mining operation.



Eric Thomas
of Citizens
Against
Phosphate
Mining in
Union and
Bradford
Counties

A PowerPoint presentation by Eric Thomas of the newly formed group Citizens Against Phosphate Mining in Union and Bradford Counties was followed by a lengthy discussion by those in the large crowd. The participants were emotional and vocal, but orderly at all times.

Chairwoman Karen Cossey allowed anyone who wished to comment or speak all the time they wanted and no one was hurried or cut off. Useful input was contributed by Marc Lyons of Macclenny and Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson of OSFR, who both had personal experience in procedure and protocol to change current county regulations to better protect the citizens.



Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson discusses the many problems of this huge phosphate mine extremely close to the Santa Fe River.

The four sitting commissioners all seemed genuinely interested in hearing the wants of the audience, and in truly representing the will of the people. Unfortunately, this is not always the case with local governments, who sometimes put their personal agenda before that of their constituents.

Only three people (two were OSFR members) formally addressed the board in opposition of the mine, but dozens in the crowd voiced opposition. No one spoke in favor of the mine undertaking.

Merrillee pointed out to the BOCC that phosphate fertilizer, for which this production is intended, is being banned all over the world. Phosphate pollutes the waters around the world causing serious algae blooms, and it is illogical to continue to support damaging the earth with this mining operation. This mine may just end up a boondoggle as phosphate use continues to be banned everywhere.

After much discussion the commissioners opted to consult the

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council for guidance in modifying current land use and their Comprehensive Plan for the county. This council next meets Thursday, Feb. 25 at the Lake City Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, 213 Southwest Commerce Blvd., Lake City, Fl. Union County Commissioner Jimmy Tallman sits on this council and he will be there to discuss the mine and the land use in Union County.

The public is welcome to attend. They may attend with no previous announcement, arriving at 7:30, or they may arrive at 7 o'clock and eat dinner with the council members. Those wanting dinner must call Ms. Jean Strong at 352-955-2200 at least one week in advance to reserve the dinner which costs \$18.00 per person.

The board also passed a motion to enact a moratorium on mining permits until such time as the new planning was carried out. Chairwoman Cossey estimated two public hearings on this where all sides could be presented.



Becky Parker is organizing and moving

Besides Eric Thomas, local resident Rebecca Parker spoke

against the mine, and has initiated a [FB page](#) and a petition to prevent the mine from being started in Union County.

This post approved by MBWE