

Submitted by: Crystal Crisp
Homeowner, Hickory Meadows
Date: July 7th, 2026

My name is Crystal Crisp, and I am a homeowner in the Hickory Meadows subdivision in Hardin Valley. I respectfully submit these comments regarding Case 7-B-26-UR and ask that they be included in the official public record.

After carefully reviewing the Staff comments, however, I respectfully believe that several findings raise significant questions that should be answered before any approval is granted. This application is not simply a request to continue an existing quarry; it is a request to expand heavy industrial mining operations significantly closer to established residential neighborhoods. My comments are intended to become part of the official record.

The quarry has operated since 1974, but the surrounding community has changed dramatically. Hickory Meadows and adjacent residential neighborhoods now exist immediately next to the proposed expansion. This application should be evaluated based on the community that exists today, not the community that existed fifty years ago. The issue before the Commission is whether expanding industrial mining operations closer to established homes is appropriate under today's planning standards.

The Staff states the proposal may be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan's policy requiring development to be sensitive to existing community character. If that is the case, I respectfully ask what substantial evidence supports recommending approval. The Rural Living designation identifies open space and single-family residential uses as primary land uses. Expanding industrial mining operations closer to established homes appears difficult to reconcile with those objectives.

The Staff acknowledges mining is not generally compatible with surrounding residential development. The question before the Commission is not whether the existing quarry may continue operating, but whether expanding it onto additional land immediately adjacent to neighborhoods satisfies the compatibility standard required by the Zoning Ordinance.

The ordinance requires adequate safeguarding and protection of neighboring interests and the general public health and safety. While the report relies on berms, landscaping, fencing and operating limitations, it also acknowledges that nearby residents may continue to experience noise and vibration. I could not identify independent analyses regarding noise, vibration, air overpressure, fumes, odors, dust, respirable crystalline silica, diesel emissions, lighting, long-term health impacts, cumulative impacts or property values. If these studies exist, I respectfully request they be identified. If not, I question how the required finding can be made.

The ordinance requires the Commission to determine that adjacent property values will not be significantly injured by noise, lights, fumes, odors, vibration, traffic congestion or other impacts. The Staff Report acknowledges adverse impacts from mining but does not identify

an independent property value analysis or explain how all factors listed in the ordinance were evaluated.

Residents were told blasting would occur a few times per month. Vulcan also disclosed to the local news. The application requests approval for one to two times per week. This represents a substantial increase from approximately 12–24 blasts annually to approximately 52–104 blasts annually. The Staff Report discusses blasting hours but does not address this discrepancy.

The application allows blasting Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., but allows other quarry operations from 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Nearby residents will experience industrial activity for up to fourteen hours per day, six days per week. These extended operating hours should be considered when evaluating compatibility.

The Staff explains that relocating or closing Graybeal Road is necessary for the expansion, yet states the roadway is not part of this application. I respectfully believe these issues cannot be separated. If Graybeal Road is relocated to Hickory Meadows Way, a public roadway will be placed immediately adjacent to an established residential neighborhood, permanently changing its character.

Staff concludes the proposal should have little impact on traffic because the access point remains the same and that no additional traffic will be added through residential neighborhoods. I respectfully ask what evidence supports these conclusions if Graybeal Road is relocated to Hickory Meadows Way. Who will use the relocated roadway? Was emergency access, school buses, pedestrian safety, construction traffic and future traffic patterns evaluated?

Berms, fencing and landscaping may reduce visual impacts, but I could not identify evidence showing they adequately reduce blasting vibration, air overpressure, dust, fumes, odors or heavy equipment noise. The report also states trees will be preserved 'as much as is practicable.' Who determines what is practicable, and how will long-term screening be ensured? Where is the evidence the size of berms is enough for this expansion to fully protect the families and their homes in the nearby communities?

The report discusses stormwater generally but does not identify independent groundwater studies, Hickory Creek water quality analyses, blasting effects on groundwater, or long-term environmental monitoring. If these studies exist, I respectfully request they be identified.

Residents will not experience these impacts separately. They will experience them together: expanded mining closer to homes, blasting up to one to two times per week if approved, industrial operations from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., continued noise and vibration, the possible relocation of Graybeal Road to Hickory Meadows Way, traffic changes, and reduced separation between residential and industrial uses. The cumulative impact should be evaluated as a whole.

Before approving this application, I respectfully ask the Planning Commission to identify the substantial evidence in the record supporting each of the findings required for approval under the Knox County Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan.

- What substantial evidence demonstrates that expanding heavy industrial mining operations significantly closer to established and newly approved residential neighborhoods is compatible with the surrounding area?
- What substantial evidence demonstrates that the public health, safety, and welfare of existing and future residents will be adequately protected?
- What substantial evidence demonstrates that the proposed buffers, berms, landscaping, and operational restrictions will adequately mitigate the long-term impacts of blasting, dust, vibration, noise, lighting, truck traffic, and industrial activity on nearby homes?
- What substantial evidence supports the applicant's conclusion that customer truck traffic, production, and operational impacts will remain unchanged despite expanding quarry operations by approximately 57.8 acres?
- What substantial evidence supports the conclusion that relocating Graybeal Road and allowing quarry operations to move closer to residential neighborhoods is in the public interest?
- What substantial evidence demonstrates that the proposed relocation of Graybeal Road improves rather than diminishes public safety, neighborhood compatibility, and long-term planning objectives?
- What substantial evidence demonstrates that the cumulative impacts of blasting, dust, vibration, truck traffic, lighting, industrial activity, and future residential growth have been fully considered rather than evaluating each impact in isolation?
- What substantial evidence demonstrates that nearby homeowners, future residents, and surrounding neighborhoods will not experience unreasonable long-term impacts as quarry operations move significantly closer to their homes?

I also respectfully ask the Commission to consider another question.

Have you personally experienced what you are being asked to approve?

- Not by reading reports.
- Not by reviewing maps.
- Not by listening to testimony.
- But by standing in one of our neighborhoods or our homes during an actual blast.

If not, I respectfully invite you to do so before making this decision.

As Commissioners, you are being asked to determine whether moving heavy industrial mining operations within hundreds of feet to a residential neighborhood is compatible with those neighborhoods and in the public interest. While reports, engineering studies, presentations, and testimony are all important parts of your deliberations, they cannot fully convey what it feels like to live beside an active quarry.

- The vibration.
- The sudden blast.
- The dust that becomes visible after blasting.
- The uncertainty of wondering whether future operations will become even closer.
- The concern for our homes.

- The concern for our families.
- The concern for our children and future generations who will one day live in neighborhoods Knox County has already approved.

Those are experiences that cannot be fully appreciated by reading a report. As a homeowner in Hickory Meadows, I would gladly welcome any member of the Planning Commission to my home during a scheduled blast so you can experience firsthand what existing residents experience today.

I make that invitation respectfully because I believe decisions of this magnitude deserve every opportunity to understand not only what is written in the application, but what life is actually like for the families who live beside these operations today and to carefully consider what those impacts may be if quarry operations are permitted to move significantly closer to our homes.

I also respectfully ask the Commission to remember that today's decision is not simply about today's residents. It is about every family who purchases a home in this area over the coming decades. It is about the approximately 95 additional homes already approved adjacent to Hickory Meadows.

It is about whether Knox County's long-term planning vision for Hardin Valley is one of continued residential growth or continued industrial expansion into residential areas. It is about whether compatibility is being evaluated based on what is best for the community or what is most beneficial for the applicant.

Most importantly, I respectfully ask the Commission to remember that once this expansion is approved, there is no practical way to move it farther away from our homes. This decision will have consequences that last for generations.

After carefully reviewing the application, I do not believe the record contains substantial evidence demonstrating that the required standards for approval have been satisfied.

Significant questions remain regarding compatibility with surrounding residential development, protection of the public health, safety, and welfare, blasting frequency, hours of operation, traffic, the relocation of Graybeal Road, environmental impacts, cumulative impacts, and the long-term effects on the families who already call this community home and those who will in the future.

I am not asking the Commission to close an existing quarry. I am asking the Commission to determine whether expanding heavy industrial mining operations significantly closer to established neighborhoods satisfies the standards required by the Knox County Zoning Ordinance, is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and truly serves the public interest.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request that the Planning Commission recommend denial of Case 7-B-26-UR.

Thank you for your time, your service to Knox County, and your thoughtful consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

Crystal Crisp