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Township Board Hosts Public Input Session about Proposed Settlement with Mid Michigan Materials

The Ann Arbor Township Board held a citizen input session on October 1 regarding the proposed settlement with Mid Michigan Materials on the Vella Pit mine operations. Twenty-seven people provided public comment, including seven sisters from the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, which maintains a Motherhouse in the Township. A variety of concerns were noted, including water levels and quality, traffic, noise, dust and other environmental impacts.

The Township purposefully chose to get public input at this stage of negotiations, given the public request for more information and participation. The MMM negotiations attempt to avoid a potentially lengthy and costly court battle with uncertain and potentially negative outcomes for our residents. State law has special protections for existing mining operations. The proposed settlement includes a permanent prohibition on dewatering, and cessation of mining at the site after December 2031 - restrictions that would bind future owners. There are additional aspects to be negotiated. If a suitable settlement is reached, Court oversight would enhance enforcement.

Here is where we stand on many issues raised at the input session:

Water Levels: The Township sought and won a temporary Court injunction on dewatering in Oct. 2023. MMM paid for new wells or lowered well pumps for 9 residents who sought compensation (and some declined to seek MMM reimbursement). Wells have recovered to various degrees depending on distance from the mine, and recovery continues. We are not aware of any nearby wells currently experiencing water loss.

Recent claims include rising water levels at a few wells that did not completely lose water during dewatering, and water tables on two properties.

Our hydrogeologist consultant, Dr. Steven Wright, retired Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at U-M, is analyzing these issues. We expect his report in the coming weeks.

Water Quality: In response to water quality complaints, the Township hired LimnoTech, an environmental and water resources engineering firm, to review reports of well water turbidity (cloudy water), odors and clogged water filters. The study is investigating a possible connection between these concerns and the fall and rise of water well levels during dewatering and post-dewatering. Conditions for each well will need analysis. We ask residents near the mine with water quality concerns to provide information to Clerk Kristine Bolhuis at Clerk@aatwp.org.

Noise Levels: We've repeatedly heard noise complaints. The proposed settlement includes an advanced truck traffic and boundary noise monitoring system selected by our Township engineering firm. A Township consultant would monitor data and identify violations. Noise violations, both at the mine and from mine-related traffic on Earhart Road, will be subject to fines.

Truck Counts: Another complaint relates to daily truck counts. The proposed settlement includes a monitoring system, installed at MMM's expense, to document daily truck counts and entry time - including any after a proposed last truck entry of 5 pm. Violations will be subject to fines.

Traffic Violations: Lt. Lindsey Thompson, our assigned representative at Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department, attended the input session and heard reports of unsafe truck driving. She requests residents report traffic violations on the non-emergency line: (734) 994-2911 as they occur. An email (thompsonl@washtenaw.org) with date, time, license plate, truck pictures and contact information will assist her follow-up.

Earhart Road Maintenance: Numerous residents have reported unsafe driving conditions due

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to ruts on Earhart Road. The Township negotiated an agreement with Washtenaw County Road Commission for monthly grading and dust control on Earhart during May-October, weather dependent. MMM is paying for it. This maintenance started in July with encouraging results for road quality and decreased road noise and dust. The Warren/Earhart intersection remains a concern under study.

Additional Environmental Concerns: Our consultants are studying Massey Lake, and the hydrological impact in the area of the mine's lake expansion and onsite reclamation plan now and into the future. Results will inform continuing settlement talks.

Thank you for keeping us informed of your personal experience and concerns. We will share information from our expert studies when reports are complete.

Ann Arbor Township's New Clerk

Kristine Bolhuis was appointed by the Board of Trustees to fill the vacancy left with the retirement of Ann Arbor Township's Clerk of the past 20 years, Rena Basch. Kristine has been working in the Clerk's department since July of 2020 when she offered to help with the overwhelming amount of absent voter ballots during the height of the pandemic in an important election year.

Born and raised in Holland, Michigan, Kristine's first introduction to the Ann Arbor area was as a student and graduate of the University of Michigan. She went on to further studies in Boston at the Massachusetts College of Art and eventually received a master's degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art. Her artistic training and creativity seem to pair well with elections work which involves the understanding of complex systems and an ability to solve problems.

Kristine's first direct interaction with the township board was in 2016 when she, as president of her neighborhood association, successfully petitioned the Board, in conjunction with the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission, to approve a Study Committee which would prepare a state grant funded report. The neighborhood, Thornoaks, went on to become the first midcentury modern neighborhood in the State of Michigan to receive local historic district designation.

Fostering community is important to Kristine, which

is why she serves as President of her neighborhood association and hosts an annual neighborhood picnic (a Thornoaks tradition for over 60 years!). She also serves on the board of a2modern, a local non-profit that aims to increase awareness of the Ann Arbor area's rich architectural heritage of midcentury



modern buildings. As Clerk, she looks forward to broadening her connections to the local community by serving Ann Arbor Township residents through elections work and as an Ann Arbor Township Board member.

Neighborhood Spotlight: Restoring Native Habitats at the Logue Family Prairie

What began as a conversation with neighbors, Jill and Nate Lada at Green Things Farm, sparked a big idea for Township residents, Kyle and Ruth Ann Logue. Inspired by Green Things' rows of pollinator flowers, Kyle and Ruth Ann decided to convert approximately seven acres of their property into a prairie full of native plants, creating habitat, restoring balance, and adding beauty for years to come.

Why a Native Prairie?

The Logues' land is divided into two areas: one acre on the north side, which had long been mowed, and six acres on the south side, where invasive species were difficult to control. Rather than continue with the endless cycle of mowing and battling weeds, Kyle and Ruth Ann chose a new path. Together, they set out to restore the land, planting 48 varieties of wildflowers (including tall boneset, goldenrod, milkweed, and hoary vervain to name just a few), alongside six to eight types of grasses. On the larger acreage, they also began working to establish sycamores, oaks, maples, white pines, and hemlocks.

The Process of Establishing a Native Prairie

Establishing a native prairie required patience and precision. With guidance from an installation company, they first prepared the land by killing the existing grass, a task that had to be done under the right conditions, with no wind and specific

temperatures. From late December through early January, native seeds were planted across the bare ground. Instead of tilling, they let the winter frost work the seeds naturally into the soil. Over time, the prairie was designed to come alive in phases, showcasing seasonal blooms.

Taking Care of the Prairie

The work doesn't stop once the prairie is established. Kyle shares, "Invasives are very stubborn. It's not like they just give up. The first couple of years, you really have to stay on them." Canary reed grass, for example, has tried to reestablish, and they continue working to control it.

Kyle and Ruth Ann do a few things to keep their prairie healthy: 1. They mow every spring with tools ranging from scythes to a brush hog, 2. They regularly fight invasives, sometimes pulling by hand, sometimes using herbicide, and 3. Every few years, the Logues use controlled burns to rejuvenate native plants and suppress unwanted growth.

The Joys Along the Way

Despite the hard work, the rewards have been many. The prairie has become a place of connection, not only with nature, but with friends, family, and community. Neighbors often stop by to ask how the transformation happened and advice on how they can do similar projects on their own property. Ruth Ann explains, "We've made friends! People will stop and say, 'We have to know how you did this!'" Ruth Ann and Kyle have shared bouquets from the prairie with friends, including arrangements for a wedding, and their grandkids and dog love racing down the trails that wind through the fields. Wildlife has returned too: butterflies, bees, and even a fawn born right on the property. And every year, the prairie surprises them with something new.



What began as an effort to reduce mowing and fight invasives has grown into so much more: a thriving prairie alive with color, wildlife, and community. The Logues' beautiful native prairie stands as a reminder that with patience, persistence, and care, we can all bring nature back into our landscapes one seed, one season at a time.

Tips for Creating Native Habitats

- Start small. Even a single strip of native plants and pollinators can make a difference.
- Try Soil Solarization. Use black plastic to heat and kill grass before planting.
- Harvest and reseed. Collect seeds and replant them. You'll enjoy seeing them pop up in new spots over the years!
- Be patient. Prairie restoration is a process. The first few years can be challenging, but the results are worth it!

If you're interested in seeding your own native plants, consider winter sowing! Check out the resources below for restoring native habitats:

Ann Arbor Area Wild Ones: A local chapter promoting the use of native plants to support biodiversity and pollinators.

Adapt Community Supported Ecology and Adapt Landscaping: Offering ecological landscaping services and education rooted in community care for the land.

Feral Flora: An Ann Arbor Township-based nursery and design company specializing in native plants for urban and home gardens.

Seeds2Community: A grassroots effort providing seeds and education to help neighbors grow native plants together.

Huron River Watershed Council: Protecting and restoring the Huron River through science, education, and stewardship.

Washtenaw County Conservation District: Supporting residents with programs, workshops, and plant sales to restore habitats.

Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission: Leading projects that improve water quality, manage stormwater, and protect local ecosystems. They also have wonderful resources for starting your own rain garden!

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SAVE THE DATE! Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Warren Road Study Area – Public Workshop

Please save the date to attend a public workshop on Tuesday, December 2 at 7 pm, at the Township Hall, to share your ideas for future use of the Warren Road property recently purchased by the Township. You'll be asked if this land should be used for farming, recreation, open space preservation, residential, or public safety or service, or a mix of all these uses! Resident input will be gathered at the meeting, and used to prepare a Warren Road Study Report, illustrating the desired future for these parcels. Please mark the date on your calendar to attend and share your views!

Household Hazardous Waste

Did you know? Washtenaw County has a FREE program for residents to drop off items like paint, household cleaners, batteries, automotive fluids and more. All year you can make an appointment to drop off items at the HHW Center during weekdays.

View the list of accepted items and schedule an appointment at
<https://www.washtenaw.org/287/Household-Hazardous-Waste-Disposal>

The items must not have been used for a business, government entity, or other organization.



- 📍 Located in Scio Township
- 📅 Open select Saturdays, Apr-Nov
- 📅 Appointments required

washtenaw.org/hometoxics