

Battle over future of Bernards quarry not over

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BERNARDS - The battle over the future of the Millington Quarry is not over.

Community Investment Partners, the potential developer of the quarry, has filed suit in Superior Court contesting the township's January decision to reverse course and revoke the designation of the Millington Quarry as a redevelopment area. The quarry has reverted to two-acre single-family zoning.

Ann Babineau, the attorney for Community Investment Partners, told the governing body last week that while her client has filed suit, it was still looking to work with the township on a less intensive development.

"We would very much like to get your input and guidance," Babineau said, adding that Community Investment Partners is willing to have a public discussion about the quarry "in a very transparent way."

[READ: Bernards reverses decision on quarry redevelopment, and will revisit plan](#)

A revised plan calls for the elimination of a proposed hotel and more preserved open space, according to Babineau said.

However, it calls for 380 housing units in 300 apartments and 80 townhomes. The plan also includes retail space, a restaurant and a community center.

The original plan called for 235 housing units.

The revised plan, which has not formally been submitted, could also help the township meet its affordable housing requirements, Babineau said.

The lawsuit was filed only because the deadline for initiating legal action was quickly approaching, she said.

Township Attorney John Belardo called the lawsuit "frivolous and meritless." Members of the Township Committee did not comment on the lawsuit or the proposal by Community Investment Partners.

Babineau's comments were a call to action for [Friends of Stop the Quarry Plan](#), the grassroots group formed to oppose the original plan to develop the quarry.

The group had held a community party Feb. 28 to celebrate the township's January decision, but now the group is organizing opposition to Community Investment Partners' latest proposal.

"They are attempting to scare the Township Committee into reinstating the area of redevelopment which is a known tactic that developers are using throughout New Jersey to overdevelop under the guise of affordable housing," the organization stated in an email to members.

Friends of Stop the Quarry has started an email campaign, asking residents to send their opinions to the Township Committee at townshipcommittee@bernards.org.

Following months of public outcry, Mayor John Carpenter said the redevelopment plan, which would have seen the 183-acre quarry off Stonehouse Road developed with a hotel, housing, restaurants, stores, a farm and a lake that would fill the deepest quarrying pit on the property, was "too aggressive."

Carpenter said the quarry was better suited for single-family homes on two-acre lots. Zoning would permit 51 homes to be built on the site.

For years, the township has grappled with the future of one of the largest undeveloped and unprotected properties in the township.

The quarry stopped operating in 2016 after more than a century of mining.

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