



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Spivey and Planning Commission

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning Director

Date: May 27, 2022

Subject: MISC 22-08 – Temporary Approval for Natural Resource Extraction and Mining Support Facilities (rock screening and crushing)

MISC 22-08 is a request filed by the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) to request temporary approval to operate rock screening and crushing on site in conjunction with the site preparation planned to begin this summer to prepare for construction of the new hospital. Processing rock on the site reduces the time and expense of trucking blasted rock offsite to be processed and then trucked back to the site for use. Processing on site also substantially reduces traffic generation that would be associated with offsite processing. The grading permit process oversees and regulates blasting activities. SEARHC would like to process the blasted rock on site, as the resulting gravel will be used as fill.

Relevant Code & Process

Table 22.16.015-5 Manufacturing/Storage Uses in the zoning code regulates higher intensity, commercial and industrial uses. One such use is “Natural resource extraction and mining support facilities”.

SGC 22.08.630 defines “Natural resource extraction” as “...*commercial or industrial operations involving the removal of timber, native vegetation, peat, mulch, topsoil, fill, sand and gravel, rock or any operations having similar characteristics. Said use includes the use of heavy equipment such as loaders, dozers, backhoes and other equipment such as crushers.*”

The hospital site (227 Tongass Drive) as well as the property leased as a prep/storage yard (300 Airport Road) are in the P – Public lands district. According to Table 22.16.015-5, natural resource extraction and mining support facilities are prohibited in this zone. However, there is a footnote to this table that applies to the P zone specifically, “*Public facilities not otherwise identified may be permitted in the public zone subject to planning commission recommendation and assembly approval subject to findings of fact that show the use is in the public interest, all reasonable safeguards are to be employed to protect the surrounding area, and that there are no reasonable alternative locations for the use.*”

Therefore, it is requested that the Planning Commission review the request, provide guidance on conditions of approval, consider whether the required findings can be made, and make a recommendation to the Assembly.

Analysis

Traffic generation: It is anticipated that the site will be experiencing increased traffic in conjunction with construction activities. However, this proposal would reduce the amount of traffic generated when compared to the alternative of offsite processing.

Noise: Noise is one of the primary concerns related to on-site rock processing. While there will be an elevated noise level as a function of construction activities, the proposal does generate additional noise. The primary mitigations available would be limitations on the hours of operation and required buffering distances to neighboring properties. It is notable that the primary use in the area likely to be disturbed by increased noise would be the existing hospital use – SEARHC will be incentivized to limit disturbances for their patients.

Odors: Minimal odor generation expected, however equipment/machinery can create exhaust fumes/odors.

Other impacts: Dust generation results from rock processing. In a particularly dry summer season, this can negatively affect surrounding properties. Watering is the primary mitigation to this impact.

Hours of operation: SEARHC has proposed limited hours of operation from 7AM to 6PM, Monday through Saturday. The approval is also temporary, with the proposed dates to be July 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

Surrounding uses: The closest surrounding uses are US Coast Guard Housing and Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS). The proposed location at 227 Tongass Drive is approximately 400 feet from the closest structure on Coast Guard housing, and the trees along the west property line are being preserved as a buffer. SEARHC aims to have the majority of blasting and processing completed before MEHS students return from school, but there may be some overlap. Students generally do not need to access the western end of Seward Avenue as frequently, as the staircase that connects the lower and upper parts of the campus is on the eastern end of Seward. The second option, 300 Airport Road is very well buffered from surrounding uses. However, this location comes with the drawback of still needing trucking to take place along Tongass Drive.

Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety: The primary safety concern will be blasting rather than processing of rock. Safety provisions for blasting are managed through the grading permit. However, it may be advisable to establish a minimum distance from streets/sidewalks for processing operations in order to provide a buffer to passing vehicles and pedestrians. The reduction in large equipment and vehicle traffic in the area is beneficial to vehicular and pedestrian safety.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposal. State and local road systems are particularly strained this summer season between the increased visitor-related traffic, the Sawmill Creek Road project,

and construction throughout town. Alleviation of heavy equipment and vehicle traffic from this site will benefit system-wide congestion. With a temporary approval and appropriate conditions of approval, potential negative impacts can be mitigated.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Aerial
- Attachment B: Site Plans
- Attachment C: Buffer Distances
- Attachment D: Photos
- Attachment E: Applicant Materials

Recommended Motions:

“I move to recommend approval for temporary natural resource extraction and mining support facilities (rock screening and crushing) at 300 Airport Road and 227 Tongass Drive in the Public lands district subject to attached conditions of approval. The properties are also known as Lot 15E US Survey 1496 and Lot 1, SEARHC Subdivision. The request is filed by SEARHC. The owners of record are SEARHC and the State of Alaska Department of Education.

Conditions of Approval:

1. Approval is valid between July 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.
2. Hours of operation are limited to no earlier than 7:00 AM and no later than 6:00 PM Monday through Saturday.
3. The applicant will take all reasonable efforts to manage dust generation.
4. Screening or crushing equipment shall be placed and operated no closer than 300 feet to any structure and no closer than 150 feet to any street or sidewalk.
5. The operations shall be consistent with the application, narrative, and plans that were submitted with this request.
6. The Assembly, at its discretion and upon receipt of meritorious complaint, may schedule a public hearing at any time for the purpose of resolving issues with the request and mitigating adverse impacts on nearby properties.

I move to adopt and approve the required findings as listed in the staff report.

1. The use is in the public interest;
2. All reasonable safeguards are to be employed to protect the surrounding area; and
3. There are no reasonable alternative locations for the use.