

To the Mayor and Council, Town of the Blue Mountains

Deputation to Town Council regarding the Astec Noise By-law Exemption Issue

Date: May 03, 2023

My name is John Edwards, and I reside at [REDACTED] in Thornbury. I live in Thornbury full-time, and my wife and I have owned the property since 1998.

Before I present my thoughts on the subject matter, I would like to thank Council for this opportunity to make this deputation.

Over the past year I have been a member of the Astec Neighbour Engagement group and was able to attend most of the meetings. From the beginning, it was difficult to schedule around the 4:00pm meeting times. There was minimum notice of the meetings, and no alternative to attend the meetings virtually. However, the meetings, I think, were generally productive, even though we had some serious procedural problems, (like proper vetting and approval of meeting minutes.)

Over time, however, I think these issues were improved upon.

The noise abatement solutions presented by Astec at the various meetings were, for the most part, changes in protocol to their existing manufacturing procedures and methods. For example, they have made their employees more conscious of making noise outside the building, and they try and have deliveries made before 7:00pm. They also organize material handling from outside to inside during the day. These changes are all positive, and I applaud Astec's efforts to simply make less noise after 7:00.

On the more technical side of noise abatement solutions, I do think some of the measures taken were, and are, less than scientific. For example, noise measuring devices, (designed to provide a "baseline" for sound measurements,) are located on the roof of the factory. Almost everyone involved, including Astec, has agreed that outside noises, like highway traffic and birds, distort the measurements, and have therefore not been entirely useful.

As far as noise barriers are concerned, Astec commissioned a Noise and Vibration consultant to make recommendations on how to block sound from their yard. The result is that storage containers have been lined up along the property line in an attempt to block sound.

The heights of the storage containers, in my opinion, make it unlikely that they are effective; and my neighbours and I have not heard a noticeable difference since they were installed. However, their effectiveness could be more scientifically measured going forward. Higher barriers, much like those seen along major highways, (think heavy concrete walls, erected like fences,) are more likely required to significantly reduce sound. Tree plantings could make this kind of barrier more attractive of course.

Having said all of that, I do applaud Astec's efforts to change their working protocols and procedures as outlined above. I truly believe that Brad Dickinson (Astec's general Manger,) and his team have made earnest and well-intentioned policy changes to help reduce noise, especially in the evening. I believe him when he has stated that "he wants to be a good neighbour,"

However, they are requesting a permanent change to the Noise By-law, allowing them to generate loud noise until 11:00pm. My overwhelming objection to this is that Astec's current team could change over time, and a less benevolent General Manger could decide to create noise until 11:00pm as he or she sees fit.

On numerous occasions at our meetings it has been pointed out that material handling changes Astec have made are sometimes cumbersome, and add cost and time to their activities. Also, deliveries are also not always convenient before 7:00pm.

So subsequent and future Astec management could decide to not continue current methods and simply do as they please until 11:00pm. This subject was specifically brought up at our last Community Engagement meeting, and the Astec management team reluctantly agreed that this could happen! My response to Aztec's "wishing to be a good neighbour" is to have them not pursue an extension, and to continue their efforts to mitigate loud noises after 7:00pm.

If I am very honest, my experience on the Neighbourhood Engagement committee has been time-consuming, inconvenient and sometimes frustrating. But also not a total waste of time. I think resulting operational changes made by Astec have been effective, but these changes need to be encouraged and enforced in future.

In summary, I do not think Astec should be granted any kind of permanent or temporary extension to the Noise By-law, and instead they should continue to be held and made accountable for excessive noise after 7:00pm in the evening.

Thank you again for considering my opinion on this issue.

John Edwards