Board Testimony: increase time for decisions on mine permitting

I’d like to speak in favor of extending the time to make decisions on mine permits to 180 days because, among other things, it will give us time to assess the impact that projects will have on jobs in the County.

It seems to me that instead of adding jobs with these mines, we’re replacing one kind of job with a different kind of job.

Right now much of the income in the county is based on its landscape and wildlife. Hunters buy and rent land to hunt deer, are outfitted by local folks, and eat in local restaurants. Tourists drive down the river to see the fall color, visit the old river towns, and browse the galleries and antique stores. City people buy second homes. Motorcyclists and bicyclists drive the winding scenic roads, stopping to patronize bars and restaurants.

How many of these people will want to come here if they start seeing sand mines every few miles, hear the blasts of the mines and the constant noise of heavy equipment, and share the roads with hundreds of sand trucks?

The more mines there are, the more widespread these problems will become, the fewer tourists and hunters there will be, and the more difficult it will be for local people to make a living from them. Residents will have fewer choices, and will feel that they have to mine, or sell out to a mine. So there will be even more mines, and even fewer choices for people.

This seems like a big change for the lives of people in this county. And right now most people don’t even know that these changes are happening. They don’t have any say in the decisions that are being made. These decisions are being made by just a handful of people – the Board of Adjustments and the miners.

It seems to me that slowing down the process would give the people of Buffalo County an opportunity to learn more about the choices they have with the coming of this new industry, and to try to have some input into decisions that dramatically affect their lives.