

SPRINGFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP

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Fleis and VanderBrink (FVeng) Consultant Interview

Springfield Township
12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350
Wednesday 19th, 2025
11:00 AM

PRESENT: Richard L. Davis, Township Supervisor
 Greg Need, Township Attorney
 Gerald Fisher, Township Special Council
 Kara Okonewski, Resident
 Chris Todd, Resident
 Dan Cabage, Fleis and VanderBrink
 Katie Hillenbrand Strohauer, Fleis and VanderBrink
 David DeLind, Fleis and VanderBrink
 Danielle Sink, Supervisor's Assistant/Recording Secretary

Supervisor Richard L. Davis convened the meeting at 11:00 AM on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at the Springfield Township offices. Supervisor Davis opened by clearly stating the purpose of the interview: the Township is seeking an independent, highly competent consulting team to assist in evaluating a large-scale sand and gravel operation. The applicant is proposing to use a 244-acre parcel of land west of Ormond Road and north of Big Lake Road in Springfield Township and an adjacent 60-acre parcel of land in Rose Township as a new sand and gravel mine site. The extraction activity is expected to take place over the course of approximately 20 years and encompass five distinct phases. During this time, the applicant estimates that between 60,000 and 665,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel will be removed from the site annually. He explained that Springfield Township contains some of the most environmentally sensitive and ecologically diverse systems in Michigan—wetlands, aquifers, interconnected stream corridors, and prairie fens that support rare and protected species. Supervisor Davis reiterated that these natural systems hold exceptional value for residents and form a core part of the Township's identity, making it the Township's obligation to approach the application with integrity, neutrality, and total transparency.

He reminded everyone that the applicant has owned the land for decades and submitted extensive data earlier in the year, which the Township has begun reviewing alongside concerns raised by the Township's planning consultant and hydrogeologist. The Township is therefore seeking a firm capable of rigorously vetting every technical claim, identifying omissions, clarifying inconsistencies, and producing structured, accessible deliverables for both the Planning Commission and the broader public. Supervisor Davis stressed that there is no predetermined outcome—approval, denial, or conditional approval will rely solely on factual evidence and objective analysis. He clarified the process for those unfamiliar: the Planning Commission, functioning independently, will deliberate on findings and make a recommendation to the Township Board, and a strong technical record is essential to support that work.

Supervisor Davis began with questions about independence and conflicts of interest, asking FV Engineering to confirm they had no financial, contractual, or informal ties to the applicant, Levy, or any affiliates such as Burroughs Materials Corporation Mining Corporation or American Aggregates. FV Engineering confirmed they had none. He asked whether any direct or indirect conflicts might exist that could compromise neutrality, and the team stated they were not aware of any but would immediately disclose if something emerged during the review.

He then requested detailed descriptions of the firm's technical expertise in areas relevant to sand and gravel mining, including hydrogeology, ecological assessment, noise, blasting, reclamation, climate resilience, and regulatory compliance. FV Engineering outlined extensive experience supporting municipal clients on mining inspections, plan reviews, and regulatory oversight, including work in Brighton Township, Saline Township, and other communities. Supervisor Davis pressed further, asking whether they had experience evaluating mining near sensitive ecosystems, protected species, or in communities with high environmental value and active public concern. The team supplied examples involving wetlands, brownfields, and large residential districts, including situations adjacent to the GM Proving Grounds where groundwater contamination required close monitoring.

The discussion turned to contamination pathways, where Supervisor Davis referenced the GM salt plume and asked whether FV Engineering could assess how excavation or dewatering might alter groundwater flow or affect containment boundaries. FV confirmed they could model contaminant mobility under different mining scenarios. They also described their experience evaluating water use impacts for large industrial proposals, such as the Big Rapids battery plant, where they performed groundwater modeling and presented detailed findings at public meetings. Supervisor Davis asked whether the firm could predict hydrostatic pressure changes, evaluate cross-contamination between aquifer layers—such as mobilizing naturally occurring arsenic—and determine impacts of deep excavation on groundwater recharge. FV stated these analyses are feasible when adequate data is available, and while geotechnical modeling may require specialized subconsultants, they routinely coordinate those services and would thoroughly vet any firm used.

Supervisor Davis then examined their capacity to evaluate long-term and cumulative impacts, including the physical consequences of removing millions of cubic yards of material. With shallow water tables and an elevated glacial formation on the property, he asked whether FV could quantify how lowering overburden weight could alter groundwater behavior across hundreds of acres. Residents added context, noting the applicant estimated 660,000 cubic yards removed annually—equivalent to billions of pounds. FV explained that geotechnical specialists would contribute to such modeling, but their hydrogeologists could integrate those findings into comprehensive groundwater assessments.

Turning to reclamation, Supervisor Davis asked whether the firm could evaluate phased reclamation plans and verify whether the applicant's approach aligned with best practices. FV emphasized their strong preference for phased reclamation to avoid "Swiss-cheese" excavation that leads to poor restoration outcomes. Supervisor Davis asked whether they could evaluate legacy agricultural impacts—herbicides, fertilizers, and soil nutrients—and determine whether contaminants could migrate into groundwater during or after mining. FV responded that baseline monitoring wells and continued sampling would form part of that analysis.

Supervisor Davis then addressed concerns regarding vibration, dust, diesel emissions, dewatering effects, and habitat disturbance, asking whether the firm could assess both direct and cumulative

impacts extending off-site. FV said yes. He then asked whether FV could evaluate potential hydrologic changes associated with exposing groundwater or creating new post-extraction lakes, noting EGLE's involvement when final pit lakes exceed certain sizes. FV confirmed familiarity with those processes.

He next shifted to the adjacent Superfund site, asking whether the firm could model how excavation or dewatering could alter the plume's movement and whether contaminants could migrate under changing pressure conditions. FV confirmed substantial experience with groundwater transport modeling, contamination pathway analysis, and regulatory coordination with EGLE and the EPA.

Supervisor Davis then raised climate resilience, asking whether FV had evaluated how long-term trends—intense rainfall, flooding, drought, shifts in recharge, and wetland hydrology—might interact with mining operations. While the firm had not studied climate trends specifically for mining, they described completing similar risk assessments for municipal wellfields in Battle Creek and said they could apply those same tools here. Supervisor Davis asked whether they could assess whether the mine would increase environmental vulnerability or reduce long-term climate resilience, and FV responded that they rely on EPA trend data, evolving federal standards, and modeling projections to make those assessments.

He then asked about legal and regulatory compliance, verifying that FV can review the application under local ordinances, EGLE requirements, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. FV confirmed they routinely coordinate with EPA and state agencies and noted that their senior hydrogeologist, Jim Brody, has extensive expert witness experience, including in dewatering litigation.

Supervisor Davis turned to transparency and public engagement, explaining that the Township expects unbiased data verification and clear public communication. He asked whether the firm could independently verify hydrological, ecological, traffic, noise, and environmental submissions, including the applicant's traffic study prepared by Fischbeck. FV described their in-house traffic group—one of the region's strongest—and noted recent examples where Fischbeck's studies required additional elements. Supervisor Davis emphasized the need for a traffic safety study, not just a volume study, given resident concerns about trucks near driveways, mailboxes, and pedestrian activity; FV confirmed they perform such analyses regularly.

He asked about their review methodology, and FV explained their multi-step process comparing third-party submissions to regulations, industry best practices, and data consistency benchmarks. They often coordinate with MDOT, EGLE, county soil erosion officers, and other agencies to ensure alignment. Supervisor Davis confirmed that the firm has worked with the Road Commission for Oakland County, which they have.

He then asked about GIS and modeling capabilities, which FV confirmed, and whether they were willing to present findings publicly—even when challenged by the applicant's experts. The firm described multiple instances where they represented municipalities during contentious public meetings and worked alongside contractors and opposing experts to ensure factual clarity. Attorney Need asked about team structure, and FV stated that the Township could designate a single point of contact or use a broader communication structure. Supervisor Davis reiterated that a single point person is essential.

Supervisor Davis discussed his emphasis on transparent government, referencing his establishment of a citizens fact-finding group, and asked whether the firm was comfortable operating in full public transparency with all findings shared openly. FV responded that openness is integral to their work, noting personal and professional commitments to public information and engagement.

Turning to logistics, Supervisor Davis asked about availability and timing. The application remains paused, the public hearing is still open, and the Township expects a roughly year-long review. FV said they could begin immediately. He also explained that applicant data will come in organized “drops,” and asked whether FV can complete intermittent reviews and provide progress updates. FV confirmed they can. Supervisor Davis clarified that Planning Commission meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month and Township Board meetings the second Thursday, and attendance may be required at certain sessions.

Residents and counsel raised additional questions. Fisher asked whether FV could help determine bonding amounts once excavation begins, and FV confirmed they have experience setting bond levels based on pit size and reclamation obligations. Fisher also asked whether they could model traffic impacts on residential living patterns rather than just intersections; FV said they could. Sarah raised concerns about sensitive habitats in the area, and FV described their work evaluating high-capacity wells, precipitation effects on wetlands, and habitat changes. Supervisor Davis asked about invasive species and whether FV could evaluate sheet-flow changes after reclamation; FV responded that they aim to avoid altering natural flow paths and would analyze any effects on the identified wetland to the rear of the site. Okonewski asked how far out secondary impacts would be evaluated, and FV explained that they often review areas four to five miles from a site depending on the issue. Supervisor Davis asked whether the firm could identify boundaries beyond which no additional scientific concern exists, and FV described using pre-modeling, pumping data, and hydrologic buffers to determine that limit. They also stated they could continue monitoring active mining sites over time.

Supervisor Davis noted that Springfield has other active and depleted mines and asked whether FV could assist with improving oversight and supporting reclamation on one of the older sites; FV said yes. Okonewski asked about dual watershed impacts on the Ormond site, which FV said is common. Supervisor Davis then requested examples of projects where the firm recommended approval, denial, or approval with conditions. FV described examples including a controversial project where the applicant met all ordinance standards, leading to a recommendation for approval, and explained that their mining recommendations often rely on hydrogeological modeling and environmental risk evaluation performed by their senior team members. Supervisor Davis reiterated the Township’s framework of three potential outcomes: full approval if no significant impacts can be demonstrated, denial if serious consequences are proven, or approval with stringent conditions if impacts can be mitigated.

Supervisor Davis asked when the Township could expect a formal proposal, and FV committed to the first or second week of December. They asked how many firms the Township was interviewing, and Supervisor Davis stated that the Township is evaluating three firms in addition to two experts already retained, seeking multiple perspectives to ensure comprehensive coverage. After expressing appreciation for the firm's time and professionalism, Supervisor Davis dismissed the consultants and held a short internal discussion with Township staff and residents. Fisher remarked that FV’s candor about their strengths and limitations was reassuring. Council Need agreed that their responses were direct, clear, and grounded in experience. Supervisor Davis asked the group whether any topics had been missed or should be added to future interviews, and

participants agreed that the questions were thorough, methodical, and effectively covered all critical areas.