

# Memo

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**DATE:** 3/30/2022  
**TO:** Bill Molnar, *Director*  
**FROM:** Derek Severson, *Senior Planner*  
**RE:** Croman Mill Site Monthly Grading Permit Inspection

Building, Planning and Code Compliance conducted the scheduled quarterly inspection for the grading permit for the Croman Mill site on March 30<sup>th</sup>. In addition, Planning staff are making at least two drive-by visits to the site each week to observe site work in progress.

Staff met with the property owners' representative Mike Montero and the contractor from Johnny Cat, Inc. On-site, staff observed that recent work has focused on the "Re Run Piles" at the southeastern limits of the area covered by the permit, and that a substantial amount of material has been removed from this area since the last inspection. Johnny Cat representatives indicated that they continue to remove stockpiled re-run materials, garbage, contaminated materials, and contaminated gravel. They said they've taken 2,000 to 3,000 cubic yards of material off-site in the last three weeks and that this did not include material that could be re-used as compactable fill on-site *other than some topsoil taken for construction of the owner's personal residence.*

The concerns raised over excavation of the site appears to be due to material being moved at the south end which is not addressed on the current grading permit. This area is within the limits of work detailed in the current permit, but is not specifically called out for material removal. The project team explained that the new buyers have shifted the vision for developing the first phase of the site to the south end, near Siskiyou Boulevard. On this end of the property, a significant portion of which is in County jurisdiction, the materials are not in defined piles but are rather large mounds overgrown with grass. This is non-native material – staff observed large, decaying wood and lengths of mangled culvert mixed in as you see in the photo below, and the owners' representative noted there were some truck-sized pieces of concrete. The Building Official recognized that it would not be suitable as fill to support construction on site so it is being removed to bring them down to the native soil/natural grade; Robin Warren, geotechnical engineer from Applied Geotechnical Engineering Consultants, has been on site and will be providing a detailed report on his observations and recommendations. *(There is a large concrete slab for the previous shop building which they noted is going to need to be removed here as well at some point in the near future.)*

This is the south-end work area observed yesterday:





The photo below is the same mound of fill I took back in late January, pre-disturbance:



The owner's team noted that they are now working with DEQ on a voluntary clean-up plan. Development of a clean-up plan for DEQ review will cost them approximately \$100,000 and once the planned clean-up work is done



it will yield a "*no further action required*" letter from DEQ which is necessary for the sale of the property to proceed. Montero did directly confirm that the buyers are still on board and the sale is moving forward.

In addition, the applicants noted they are working with Ashland Fire & Rescue to create and maintain an acceptable fire break around the site's perimeter well in advance of the weed abatement deadline, and that there is metered city water available which will be used to keep a water truck full and on site during all site work.

In terms of potential amendments to the grading permit, we discussed:

- Making the required inspections monthly rather than quarterly, although it sounds like they are in regular communications with Code Compliance outside of the quarterly inspections. The Building Official suggested we formalize a monthly inspection and log results in Energov to have a clear paper trail.
- Clarifying the days where work is allowed (currently, the permit just says five days a week; applicant would like to be able to work a total of five days per week, but not limited to M-F as their work is dependent on when labor is available. They indicated they have remained well within the allowed hours and total daily trips.)
- Identifying the areas where grass-covered mounds of non-native material are being removed at the south end of the site to enable the first phase development of the site by the new buyer and clarifying that these mounds of non-native material which are unsuitable as structural fill will be removed to natural grade. (They are maintaining silt-fencing on the downhill edge to avoid any erosion which would affect the drainage to the south.)

Montero asked that we please run the specific language by him, if we feel these changes need to be made to the existing permit, but he seemed generally agreeable.

The only other potential option I think might help would be having them somehow clearly identify the piles of material to be retained on site (*based on the current permit, there are only three*) so it would be clear for us and for neighbors that these materials are not being disturbed or removed.

Photos from this site visit are saved in the Croman folder.

