

Alyssa Bryant

From: Martha Oswald
Sent: Monday, September 12, 2016 8:18 AM
To: Alyssa Bryant
Subject: FW: In support of Resolution 16-0681R

From: Nancy Nelson [mailto:nnelson1001@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, September 11, 2016 4:54 PM
To: Council <Council@duluthmn.gov>
Subject: In support of Resolution 16-0681R

September 11, 2016

City Councilors:

I am writing to ask you to **please vote in support of Resolution 16-0681R**, which calls for the Minnesota DNR to request an evidentiary hearing concerning any “permit to mine” application submitted for the Polymet project.

I have worked as a geologist for the Minerals Division of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, as an environmental consultant in northeastern Minnesota, and as a geology instructor at UWS and Lake Superior College. I understand very clearly that mining is necessary if we are to obtain the minerals that our society uses in such great abundance. I also understand very well the social and environmental impacts of mining, both good and bad.

No matter where it takes place, extracting mineral resources from the earth’s crust disrupts and displaces any human community or natural ecosystem located in the way of the mining operation. And in some mineral-rich parts of Asia, South America, and India the disruption is often disastrous. In many of these countries, government leaders sell mineral rights to the highest bidder, and—if regulations exist at all—they are seldom enforced. The people whose communities are impacted have no voice in the process, derive no economic benefit from the mines, and receive no assistance when their drinking water is contaminated or the forests they depend on for survival are clear cut. When mining ends, the global corporations are allowed to walk away without compensating the people or undertaking any sort of land reclamation.

Despite these problems, the demand for mineral resources will only increase as the world's population grows. To make this industry more sustainable, we must learn how to mine the earth's crust in a way that causes as little damage as possible. In the United States we are making progress in this direction, but we still have a long way to go. Developing a mine is an extremely expensive undertaking and, despite the best intentions, it can be tempting—and economically compelling—for mining companies to cut corners to save money. Strong regulations, enforcement of those regulations by impartial government agencies, and oversight by watchful community stakeholders are all necessary to ensure that this does not happen.

Here in Minnesota, regulations for permitting non-ferrous metallic mineral mines were developed approximately twenty years ago, when interest in the copper-nickel deposits of northeastern Minnesota increased due to rising metal prices and advances in hydrometallurgical processes. Those who developed the regulations believe that this permitting process is rigorous enough to prevent environmental disasters from occurring; however, the regulations have not yet been tested by an operating sulfide mine—Polymet will be the first. Fortunately, every citizen has the opportunity to be part of the planning process for the development of this new mine. In order to move closer to a world in which mining is conducted in a safe, sustainable, and humane way, it is crucial that citizens and their elected officials participate in each step of this process.

I am very grateful that city councilors Anderson, Sipress, and Westerlund, acting on behalf of the citizens of Duluth, are closely monitoring the development of the Polymet project and are working to ensure that it meets the requirements that the State of Minnesota has established to protect the integrity of our environment. I commend them for their actions, and I hope that all city councilors will support this resolution.

Nancy S. Nelson

1001 North 10th Avenue East

Duluth, MN 55805

nnelson1001@gmail.com

218-310-3154