

Six Nations Band Council signing \$8 million deal with NextEra

By Donna Durie and Chase Jarrett, Writers

Six Nations Elected Council is set to sign an \$8 million deal with wind turbine company NextEra and will start to see money from the Summerhaven project flowing to the community next year.

Elected Chief Bill Montour said council could be signing the deal as early as today, after council's Committee of the Whole voted on Monday to move forward with the project and **band council approved it Tuesday.**

Amy Lickers, community planner with Six Nations Economic Development, said they've concluded their 60-day community consultation period and are recommending council move forward with the project based on 216 community members participating in meetings and discussions with them and NextEra.

Community consultation concluded last week with a poorly-attended meeting at the community hall last Tuesday. Only eight people showed up for the final community meeting on the 800-acre Summerhaven wind farm project, consisting of 59 wind turbines on Nanfan Treaty land clustered around Jarvis, Fisherville and Rainham Centre.

Councillor Bob Johnson was the only councillor who voted against going forward with the project at Monday's COTW meeting. Councillor Mark Hill was absent.

The Summerhaven project is expected to go online this summer and the community will start to see money from the project a year from the start-up date, said Lickers. Six Nations will get \$435,000 a year for the next 20 years. In addition Six Nations will receive \$15,000 a year for 20 years for scholarships, and a one-time allocation of \$50,000 for a deer and eagle monitoring program.

Lickers could not provide the final community engagement report to The Turtle Island

News, saying it had to be approved by general council first. The report outlines the community's willingness to move forward with the compensation package offered by NextEra.

"Money is always going to be an issue," she said about the deal. "For hundreds of years now, the community has seen a lot of injustice going on so whenever we talk about money it's never going to seem like enough to make right what's been going on for 200 years."

Councillor Johnson told council's Committee of the Whole Monday he was leery of entering into a contract with NextEra because of what he saw as NextEra's penchant for suing people who are against its projects in Southern Ontario.

"Is this the kind of partner we want?" he asked.

Johnson referred to a recent lawsuit NextEra launched against an Ontario woman for using the company logo on a Web site against wind farms while replacing the words "NextEra" with "NextError" or "NextTerror."

"That court case actually has to do with a copyright infringement," Lickers told the committee. "The person had been using their logo."

She said NextEra reps weren't able to comment on the suit at last Tuesday's community hall meeting, except to say they had asked the person a number of times to stop using their logo.

"It had to come to legal action," said Lickers.

Councillor Ava Hill told the committee she didn't want anyone getting the idea that Six Nations was in "partnership" with NextEra. "I don't think we're in partnership with NextEra," she said. "They consulted and now they are accommodating us for a project they want to do in our territory. It's completely different than a partnership."

Lickers said she believes the influx of green energy

projects on Six Nations land is starting to slow down.

Councillor Darryl Hill suggested to the committee Six Nations construct its own green energy project, such as a solar farm, on Six Nations to provide homes with off-the-grid power.

Six Nations Band Council received about \$60,000 from NextEra to host community consultation sessions but last week's low turnout means a revamped communications strategy is in order, said Lickers.

"Obviously, I think it's disappointing," she said. "I'm struggling now with how do we get the word out and people more involved."

But Lickers had scheduled meetings on holidays, weekends, and during council sessions.

One was held on Mother's Day and a second on a Tuesday when band council meetings are held.

She said that was by accident.

"There's more work I'm going to have to do on my end to make sure people know that it's important for them to participate in things," said Lickers.

"The issue in our community is there's always something going on," said Lickers. "And that's a good thing. But people are involved in sports, a lot of clubs and organizations, and that's why we try to hold them all on different nights."

Lickers said, based on the input she received, people mainly wanted to ensure the deal was a good one for Six Nations.

"Offhand a lot of them (concerns) are the same," she said. "People want to make sure we're getting the best deal for the future - not even monetarily, but making sure the lands are being looked after and development is done in a good way."

The project will require six to eight full-time employees; 56 turbines are already in construction or complete.



Turnouts to band council's community sessions have been low, but the majority of the meetings were held on holidays or competed with other scheduled activities. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

Lickers said, in the future, community consultation has to happen sooner. Council only presented the NextEra project details to the community this year, even though it's been in talks with the company since 2007, said Lickers.

"We've had some plans we haven't been able to enact yet," she said. "That means getting community involve-

ment at the beginning when proponents first come, and not after the agreement is made."

She added: "We're trying to do this better because we want people to know their voice is important, and they have a right to be able to guide the future of the community. Hopefully at some point in time we'll have 108 (people show up) instead of

just eight."

The Confederacy Council, through the Haudenosaunee Development Institute, is also set to sign a \$7 million deal with NextEra in the coming weeks.

*Watch The Turtle Island News Web site this week for daily updates including the NextEra/band council deal at www.theturtleislandnews.com