

Elected Chief breaks tie: Band Council goes ahead with alcohol referendum despite 1988 resolution

By Donna Duric
Writer

In a hurried special meeting Tuesday Six Nations Band Council voted to continue with advance polls on a proposed alcohol regulation law this Saturday despite a 1988 band resolution stating the community did not want alcohol to be sold here and that band council would not bring up the issue of alcohol regulation in the community again.

Band Council voted 4-4 Tuesday morning to move forward with the referendum but failed to rescind the 1988 resolution, with Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill breaking the tie to allow the referendum and community engagement to move forward.

"I'm in favour," said Hill upon seeing the tie. "So it's passed."

Voting in favour of the resolution were: Darryl Hill, Dave Hill, Melba Thomas and Wray Maracle.

Opposed were Bob Johnson, Lewis Staats, Carl Hill, and Roger Jonathan. Councillors Helen Miller, Sherrylyn Hill-Pierce, Mark Hill and Terry General were absent.

The May 3, 1988 Council minutes state the resolution as follows: Moved by Lewis Staats and seconded by Kenneth Hill, that this Council acknowledge the petition put forth on May 3, 1988, by the people of the community, that liquor not be sold on the Six Nations of the Grand River Indian Reserve and that the Six Nations Council concur with the wishes of the community that the question of the sale of liquor not be put forth again. Carried.

Band council did not rescind this motion Monday.

Councillor Helen Miller alerted Band Council to the existence of the 1988 resolution on Monday - almost two months after its economic development department initiated a community engagement session to determine

the community's acceptance of permissive alcohol regulations and a proposed beer brewery here.

Councillor Miller said she was disappointed with the re-

sults.

"If I had been there they would have lost. I would have supported honouring the 1988 resolution. True, the Council back then didn't actually say no to selling alcohol on the reserve but they

did support a petition from the community that said no to the sale of alcohol. I think all of Council should have been present given the importance of the issue but because the meeting was hastily called some of us couldn't rearrange our schedules. Also the half hour timeframe the Chief gave for the meeting didn't seem adequate to me to have meaningful discussion."

Councillor Miller said she could not attend because of a doctor's appointment.

The old resolution was moved on May 3, 1988 by Lewis Staats and seconded by then-councillor Kenneth Hill. It stated: "That this council acknowledges the petition put forth on May 3, 1988 by the people of the community, that liquor not be sold on the Six Nations of the Grand River Indian Reserve and that the Six Nations Council concur with the wishes of the community **that the question of the sale of liquor**



Elected Chief Ava Hill

not be put forth again."

Coun. Darryl Hill made a motion Tuesday morning, seconded by Coun. Dave Hill, to continue with a Jan. 17 referendum on creating an alcohol law that could also pave the way for the proposed beer brewery at Oneida Business Park.

Coun. Carl Hill was opposed to moving forward with the referendum and said band council should meet with the Confederacy Council to discuss regulating alcohol in the community. He said he will be "surprised" if people vote in favour of allowing alcohol

sales in the community in the Jan. 17 referendum.

Coun. Wray Maracle voted to move forward with the referendum, adding that band council didn't need to rescind the 1988 resolution because they've already been discussing alcohol for years, citing numerous resolutions it's made permitting the Six Nations Veterans Association to consume alcohol at the Community Hall in conjunction with its yearly Remembrance Day parade.

Band Council said it will rescind the 1988 resolution if the community votes in favour of permissive alcohol regulations.

The installation of the beer brewery is contingent on the community voting in favour of permissive alcohol regulations.

SNED was previously going to put the proposed beer brewery to a vote but instead decided to make the brewery's approval contingent on

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the community voting in favour of alcohol regulations. SNED has since said it is undertaking a "qualitative" instead of "quantitative" engagement process on the proposed brewery.

The referendum will offer three choices to vote on: -creating a permissive alcohol law that would allow the sale, manufacture and distribution of alcohol on the territory;

-creating a restrictive law disallowing the sale, manufacture and distribution of alcohol on the territory;

-or retaining the status quo (no alcohol laws on Six Nations).

Yesterday's vote also comes just days after the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council forbid the sale and manufacture of alcohol and drugs on the territory. The Confederacy resolution states:

"At a duly convened council on January 3, 2015, the Hodiyanehsoh carefully considered the proposed Alcohol Law and Brewery at Six Nations Grand River Territory. After careful reflection and consideration of the damaging effects that alcohol has

had on our people and continues to have, the Hodiyanehsoh unanimously agreed that it would be in violation of our Creator given laws to support and encourage the use of Dega'nigohade:nyohs, "Mindchangers" (Alcohol and Drugs). As such, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council does not support the manufacturing or retailing of alcohol or drugs and are opposed to any effort to bring danger into our Territory."

Coun. Helen Miller said on Monday she saw the HCCC decision as a statement not a law.

"As far as I'm concerned, they voiced their feelings and that's fine."

She questioned if the HCCC resolution will result in any shutdowns of bootleggers here.

"What are they going to do about the alcohol that's already being sold on the reserve?" she said.

"I question if the (Confederacy) got direction from the clan mothers/clans before making their decision on Saturday or did the Chiefs make the decision on their own? To me, the sale of alcohol on reserve is a community issue

and should be decided by the community, not by the (Confederacy) or the (elected council). People have a right to say yes or no to the issue. In 1988, when the council of the day cancelled a planned referendum on selling alcohol on reserve, many people believed that was a violation of their human rights."

The push for alcohol regulations comes after a Kitchener investor began eyeing Six Nations as a potential location for a craft beer brewery.

Jim Brickman, owner of IPA Enterprises and a craft beer pioneer, has been working with Six Nations Economic Development for almost two years to open a brewery here. SNED has held nine sparsely-attended community engagement sessions since November to determine the community's acceptance of the beer brewery and alcohol regulations on Six Nations. Only a handful of community members attended SNED's latest information session at the tourism building on Dec. 29, with one woman questioning the effectiveness of the engagement process.

Teri Morrow, a local dietician, said she felt the engagement process needs to be more in-



Councillor Helen Miller says full council debate should have been held.

clusive.

"It's not really a community engagement at this point," she said. "They're just sharing information."

There is also the question of voter participation in the upcoming referendum. A number of traditional community members have said they will not be voting.

SNED said it is collecting feedback and input from community members through its Web site and comment cards handed out at meetings if people don't want to vote.

Morrow said there needs to be more discussion.

"A lot of things need to be discussed on that first in order for it to really be an engagement process," she said. Morrow said she sees com-

munity engagement as a "long-standing process of relationship-building. It's not one-offs and forums alone." Jan Longboat, a local gardener and herbalist, has been vocally against the idea of a brewery here. She said the brewery would only make alcohol cheaper and more accessible for people on Six Nations.

"This is not our culture, what we're doing," said Longboat.

"They've bastardized our culture. We don't need a community referendum. Scrap the community referendum because (they're) not getting the consensus of the community."

She hypothetically said, "They're going to take the majority of the people that voted - if 10 vote and 7 say yes, they're going to run that through - that's not right. Council won't listen to us. Council won't listen to anybody."

Longboat says she won't be voting in the referendum. "I don't vote. That's why I'm here with my voice, along with many, many people that don't vote."

She believes Six Nations should use the empty OBP warehouse for cold food stor-

age instead.

"Why don't we look at our food supply instead of a brewery? Let's make it a food storage facility. We're sick here with diabetes, we're sick with cancer...so why would we want to bring a brewery here? We're already sick. Invest in an organic (food) store. This is critical. We need to look at our food supply and stop going off the reserve to buy food."

She said she understands people will still buy alcohol regardless of whether there's a brewery here or not.

"You can't stop anyone from getting it in Brantford, but we have to start educating people to realize what alcohol is doing to our community. We don't need to bring it here so they can drink more. Why do we even want to think about bringing more alcohol to the reserve?"

The next information session is set for tonight, Jan. 7 from 5 to 8 p.m. at I.L. Thomas and the final community meeting is set for Jan. 12 at Six Nations Polytechnic from 6 to 9 p.m. Advance polls are also being held this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Six Nations Polytechnic.