

McClung Road housing development moving forward

By Donna Durie
Writer

Haldimand County Mayor Ken Hewitt says he hopes construction on the McClung Road housing development will begin "soon," despite a lack of consultation and accommodation with either Six Nations Band Council or the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council.

Hewitt said the county did approve the development last year after notifying Six Nations Band Council through the Grand River Notification Agreement.

"They were notified throughout the planning process and still continue to be," he said.

But Six Nations Elected Coun. Helen Miller says Empire Homes has still refused to consult and accommodate Six Nations on the massive 3,500 home development in the northeast corner of Caledonia just off McClung Road and Hwy. 54. "Six Nations Lands and Resources sent them (Empire Homes) a letter three weeks ago informing them of the duty to consult and accommodate and we haven't heard back anything," said Miller.

That letter is the latest in at least a dozen attempts by band council to get Empire Homes to consult and accommodate Six Nations ever since learning of the

plan to build the massive development two years ago.

The land sits within the Haldimand Tract, a parcel of land six miles on either side of the Grand River given to Six Nations by the British after the American War of Independence for their allyship with the Crown.

Archaeology work has not resumed, according to HCCC legal advisor Aaron Detlor.

"The archaeology work is on hold pending the discussions between the HDI and archaeologist," he said.

Amick is open to discussions with the HDI and HCCC but "we're having trouble coordinating" meetings with them, said Detlor. The builder, Empire Homes, has not responded to any letters from the HDI requesting consultation and accommodation.

"We have asked Empire Homes on a number of occasions to engage and to date we have not formally engaged with them," Detlor said.

"It's unfortunate that the province and municipalities continue to disregard the rights that are established with respect to the Haudenosaunee," he continued. "Unfortunately it appears the province and municipalities aren't learning any lessons of the past. The province continues to try to take an approach that does-

n't really respect treaty rights."

Hewitt said despite the county's powerlessness in forcing housing development company Empire Homes to consult and accommodate, he is willing to do what he can to facilitate those discussions with both governments here on Six Nations.

"I think it's an exciting opportunity for the area as a whole," he said.

Planning for the new community will take at least 10 to 20 years, said Hewitt, and could include the building of a new bridge across the Grand River to accommodate the influx of traffic on the already-congested bridge.

He said he's not concerned another eruption like the 2006 land reclamation at Douglas Creek Estates could occur.

Coun. Miller says she's concerned about housing Six Nations high school students. She said McKinnon Park High School in Caledonia is already over capacity and as far as she knows, there are no plans to build another high school in the area in the near future. More Six Nations high school students attend McKinnon Park than any other area high school, she said.

The project has already hit a snag due to the lack of consultation with Six Na-

tions. On May 20, archaeological work came to a standstill on the project after Haudenosaunee Development Institute (HDI) archeology supervisor Wayne Hill shut down the work, saying the company has refused to work with the HDI, the HCCC's planning department.



Six Nations band monitors and New Credit were on site three weeks ago working with archeologists on site. (Photo by Donna Durie)

Hill said the archaeology re-assessment was taking place without HCCC or HDI involvement but both the Six Nations Band Council and New Credit Council have monitors involved in the project.

Hill said, "I advised the archaeology company this couldn't take place without the HDI."

Jim Sherratt, Team Lead- Archaeology with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's (MTCS) Archaeology Program Unit said in a let-

ter: "In November 2014, Six Nations expressed concerns with a lack of engagement on the project. The ministry facilitated a meeting in late March 2015 between Six Nations (band council), the proponent, their archaeologist and the approval authority to better understand the concerns. We continue

partment consultant Phil Monture and land research director

Lonny Bomberry instructed them not to work with the HDI.

"He said Phil and Lonny told us to ignore the HDI."

Coun. Miller said she couldn't verify if Monture or Bomberry actually instructed Empire Homes to ignore the HDI but she agrees with them.

"The (HCCC and HDI) tell people not to consult with us (band council) all the time," she said.

HDI Executive Director Hazel Hill said archaeology work had resumed on the site this past spring after provincial officials advised Empire Homes that last year's archaeology assessment was sub-par and needed to be redone.

Empire Homes has refused HDI's request for engagement.

"We have sent letters and asked the ministry to direct the archeologist of their obligation and asked who is going to uphold the honour of the crown with regards to Haudenosaunee treaty rights," she said.

Empire Homes representatives on site refused to comment to Turtle Island News during the shut-down three weeks ago. OPP were on the scene of the shut-down but it's not known who called the police.