

Sit in, discussion group advance polls go ahead

By Donna Duric
Writer

Advance polls on Six Nations' proposed alcohol regulation law went ahead with little disruption Saturday at Six Nations Polytech.

About 30 irate community members confronted Six Nations band councillors and Economic Development staff questioning the referendum.

And Six Nations Men's Fire leader Bill Monture said the Men's Fire was going to shut down the road going into Polytech at 8 a.m. that morning to prevent voters from going but changed his mind after receiving texts from people who said they wanted to vote.

Monture, and about a dozen men and community members, confronted band council at the polls Saturday morning telling them the community doesn't want alcohol sold here.

Monture added he doesn't believe the results of the referendum will be legal.

If passed, the proposed alcohol law will pave the way for a beer brewery in the empty warehouse at Oneida Business Park.

A final referendum is set for this Saturday (Jan. 7) at the Community Hall.

Monture predicted band council will go ahead with the brewery regardless of the results of the referendum and he threatened to shut it down.

"I don't like the idea of alcohol," he said. "I don't drink myself. If I didn't get those texts, that road would have been shut down and nobody would have been able to come and vote on anything. You guys can do all the voting you want but at the end of the day, when they start digging down the road there (at the brewery) I'm going to be there. Nobody's going to put any

pipeline [waterline] into that Oneida Business Park.

"I don't give a shit who votes but it's not going to happen because I am responsible for all those faces that are still yet to come," he continued. "We have to be mindful of that."

He told the few band councillors present: "You're thinking white and you have to get out of that damn canoe. Right now, if we wanted to, we could take away all of band council's privileges. You guys don't even exist because of who you represent. You work for the feds and the province. You have no authority to do what you're doing."

Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill said band council



Terrylynn Brant held a "sit-in" at one of the polling stations demanding answers to what she and others have said are confusing ballot questions.

will not move forward with the brewery if the majority of the vote comes back rejecting the sale and manufacture of alcohol in the community.

"Council will respect the wishes of the community," said Hill.

But elected chief Hill was a band councillor when a band council appointed citizen's election code committee presented band council with election code changes that had been voted on by the community in a duly called vote four years ago.

Hill voted down the community election code vote

claiming at the time not enough people voted and it was confusing.

Monture blasted band council for refusing to rescind a 1988 resolution that said no to alcohol on the territory and moving ahead with the referendum anyway.

"You guys come along and didn't even rescind that," said Monture. "In reality, that still stands today."

Six Nations Community Planner Amy Lickers said SNED and band council didn't learn about the 1988 resolution until almost two months into its community engagement process on the issue.

"When we were doing our research we had heard about the proposed (1988) referendum and learned it was stopped, but we

didn't have actual wording of what the motion said," Lickers said. "That only came to us last weekend." Band Council held an emergency meeting last Tuesday and decided to continue with the referendum regardless of the previous resolution saying it will only rescind the previous resolution if the community votes against permissive alcohol laws on the territory.

Monture chastised band council for not paying heed to a decision passed by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council two weeks ago de-



The Six Nations Men's Fire and supporters held a discussion with band councillors at Polytech Saturday while advance polls continued. (Photo by Jim C Powless)

nouncing the sale and manufacture of alcohol and drugs on the territory. "Even the chiefs put out a declaration about harm to the community yet your council still goes ahead with it," he said.

Lickers replied that the disconnect between band council and Confederacy council presents a "challenge" when it comes to far-reaching decisions that affect the community.

"We have more than one leadership body that represents a lot of different people," she said. "Not everybody feels like their voice is represented by the traditional council so we have to try to find ways to include everybody's voice."

Lickers said there is already alcohol in the community and admitted the community doesn't follow the 1988 resolution against alcohol, prompting community member Michael Doxtator to ask: "Why pass the new law if you can't enforce the old one?"

She didn't have an answer. A number of Band councillors and the elected chief lined up to vote as soon as the polls opened.

Band council has not been successful in running business.

Some of its past failures include a \$5 million failed incinerator at the landfill and the ill-fated Grand River Mills yarn factory, which was to be located in the empty Oneida Business Park warehouse that band council is eyeing for the brewery.

Community member Terrylyn Brant took a stand against the referendum, holding up voting by parking herself at a polling station until the early afternoon.

Band Councillor Melba Thomas tried to speak with Brant while Brant was in the process of voting. Thomas was removed from the room.

Brant had numerous questions about the process and wrote comments on her ballot that caused it to be rejected by the electronic machine.

Three hours into her "sit in" three band employees from the economic development department entered the polling station to speak with her about her questions.

Brant finally left with her ballot in her purse around 1 p.m. after saying "this whole process is confusing. The questions are confusing. While I was in there several people asked what the questions meant

and had to have them interpreted for them. How is that a fair vote. Anything they said to the people casting their ballots was influenced by these people."

She wasn't the only one upset with the process.

Resident Marty Smith threw his ballot in the recycling bin. It was retrieved by an election operator.

Band Council's economic development department hired a non-native electoral company to run the polls. No tender was issued.

Instead band councillors said they were in charge of the vote.

Senior Administrative Officer Dayle Bomberry stood guard at the door to the polling room, which had a sign taped to the door barring cell phones and anyone without a ballot from entering.

However, when Six Nations Library Director Sabrina Saunders showed up to vote, Bomberry allowed her to bring her 17-year-old daughter into the room with her. She wanted to view the voting process.

The ballot boxes were to be taken to the Six Nations Police Station for safekeeping until this weekend's final vote, said Lickers.