

Final meeting on alcohol referendum sparks anger and tears

By Donna Duric and Lynda Powless, Writers

Tears, anger and demands Six Nations Band Council answer for why the community is facing, for the second time, a referendum on alcohol regulations filled the last in a series of community "engagement" sessions held by the band's economic development department Monday night.

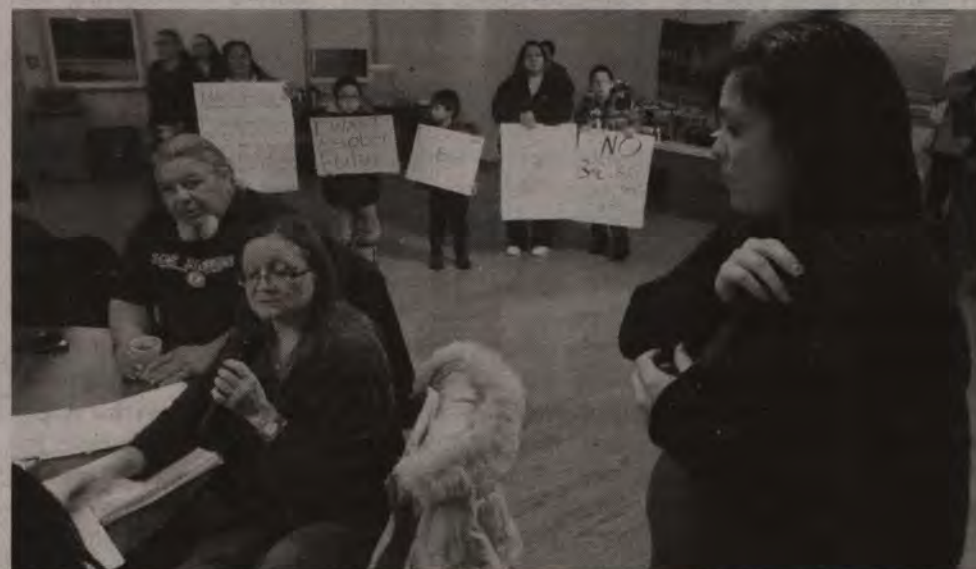
Community members demanded answers on why the band council was re-

"I have a general feeling there's no support for the brewery," Lickers told more than 70 people, mostly women, gathered at Six Nations Polytech Monday night. SNED held 11 community sessions to gauge the community's support for alcohol regulations that would pave the way for a beer brewery.

A referendum will be held Saturday. SNED is offering the community three choices when people cast

concerns ranging from increased alcohol-related problems to general distrust toward Six Nations band council.

"I don't trust our council anymore," said Reenie Hess. "It will all come back to council decide. I don't know if I trust the council. The very people I voted for - I expected them to be against something like this. We have councillors that miss meetings. What is our recourse? They don't attend meetings but



Community members like Darlene Lickers demanded answers from economic development's planning officer Amy Lickers who eventually left the heated meeting in tears after Norma General questioned her integrity.



Community members held up signs during the last of a series of economic development department meetings on an alcohol referendum and brewery proposal. The meeting became heated as community members demanded answers. (Photos by Jim C Powless)

visiting the issue of alcohol sales in the community in spite of a 1988 resolution stipulating the issue would never be raised again.

"If you have this referendum and the vote is no are you going to raise this issue again in a few years," one woman asked Matt Jamieson, Six Nations Economic Development (SNED) director.

Jamieson said he was surprised "any political body would pass a resolution saying they would never revisit an issue."

Community Planner Amy Lickers says she does not see a proposed beer brewery at Oneida Business Park (OBP) moving forward.

their ballots this weekend: -voting in favour of permissive alcohol regulations in the community;

-voting on restrictive alcohol regulations in the community

- voting for no alcohol regulations, (or the status quo which means individuals apply for provincial permits if they want to hold an event selling alcohol).

Lickers says the brewery will only go forward if the community votes to allow the sale, manufacture and distribution of alcohol on the territory.

Not a single person voiced support for the project during the three-hour meeting, which saw community members voice

they'll be there if the money shows up."

Community members also criticized Kitchener investor Jim Brickman, Six Nations potential partner in the brewery, questioning his reasons for wanting to open a brewery here.

"Coming here tonight was like a slap in the face," Kim Logan told Matt Jamieson, SNED director. "You're not dealing with dumb little Indians here anymore. I thought it was going to be a simple yes or no. I have a master's degree and I'm wondering if anyone else finds this (ballot) confusing. I'm really disappointed in the processes."

Onondaga Chief Arnie General said he was against the brewery.

"You're saying it will create more jobs," he said. "For who? Sure, the undertaker will get more money. I know we're all concerned over this alcohol problem. It's bad for our culture; it's bad for our people. It changes your mind. It changes your mentality. It creates animosity. I can't see it helping us out, at all. It would be more beneficial if they built a canning factory. I'm against it."

Lickers laid out disturbing statistics from Six Nations New Directions Group regarding alcohol and pregnancy: in the last five years, 55 clients at New Directions were diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and out of 261 pregnant clients, 189 of them admitted to drinking between four and 16 weeks' gestation.

Educators and social workers are seeing an increased need for support for people affected by a mother's substance abuse during pregnancy, said Lickers.

The brewery is anticipated to generate \$2 to \$4 million annually within the first four years of operation while Six Nations pays back Brickman's investment in the \$15 mil-

lion project.

The project could create 145 jobs in the community and would include the expansion of a water line from Stoneridge to OBP at a cost of \$6 million. Brickman's company, IPA Enterprises, is offering to pay \$2 million toward that cost. Jamieson said Brickman is seeking out investors for the full \$15 million cost of the project. Lickers was also heavily criticized by some community members and left the meeting early in tears. Norma General told Lickers she was "scary."

"You're scary to me," she said. "Where's your spirit? Words come out of your mouth like a robot."

General said she's noticed that talk of the proposed project has brought "stress" to the community.

"You're bringing something that doesn't belong to us. We're trying to revitalize our people...to bring back those values of who we are and we can't do it when you're inviting someone to come in with a brewery, which goes against all of our principles."

Marilyn Maracle was upset that band council was

willing to spend money investing in the brewery but not toward recreation or other community needs. She also called Brickman a "crook" in regard to a lawsuit he was involved in with his former company, Brick Brewing, which he won.

Brickman objected to the insult and lectured the audience about alcoholism before Logan told him to be quiet so the community could speak, to loud applause.

The brewery is one of the ventures SNED is working on that will bring money into the community. The projects will be managed by an independent trust board that will be seeking members in the next few weeks, said Lickers.

Neah Anderson, an early childhood educator, said she believes a referendum risks Six Nations' sovereignty. "I'm afraid of that ballot," she said. "The simple act of having this referendum makes us a municipality."

The final vote will be tallied at 7 p.m. Saturday, with band council voting to accept or reject the results of the referendum on Feb. 2.