

Community feedback negative on brewery project

By Donna Duric
Writer

Community members have expressed concern on everything from addictions to impaired driving deaths if Six Nations Band Council gets enough votes in favour of alcohol regulations that would pave the way for a beer brewery on the territory.

Less than 20 community members turned out for a meeting at Polytech Monday night but the ones who did show up were vehemently against the proposed brewery. The brewery is contingent on community members voting in favour of an alcohol law in a referendum on Jan. 17 that would permit the sale, manu-

facture and distribution of alcohol on the territory. But so far, comments at public meetings don't seem to be supportive of the brewery idea. Community member Jan Longboat said, "I'm totally, totally against a brewery. I'm really concerned because if all economic development can



Elder Jan Longboat says she is "totally against" a brewery at Six Nations. (Photos by Donna Duric)

think for Six Nations is a brewery and cigarettes and shysters, then maybe we better change our name to 'Sick Nations' instead of 'Six Nations.'" Longboat brought up a 2009 lawsuit between well known brewer Jim Brickman and his former company, Brick Brewing Ltd., calling him a "shyster" because of his former legal trouble. Brickman, through his com-

pany IPA Enterprises, is partnering with Six Nations band council to launch a brewery here after a chance meeting with Six Nations Economic Development Director Matt Jamieson a few years ago. But Longboat said Six Nations has been burned in the past during economic development deals that have gone badly for the community. "We don't need another shyster in this community," said

Longboat. "Anybody wants to see what Mr. Brickman has done, it's not good. But Brickman defended himself, taking offense to being called a shyster. "I am very well thought of in Kitchener," he said. Brickman is known for launching Ontario's first craft brewery in Waterloo in 1984, then he went on to build Brick Brewing into one of the
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Less than 20 people turned out to a meeting on alcohol regulations Monday. (Photos by Donna Duric)

Six Nations Band council partnering to put brewery in OBP

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largest independent beer companies in the country.

He was hailed as a craft-brewing pioneer and a beer industry visionary before leaving the company he founded under a cloud in 2009 and a subsequent lawsuit over his expense accounts.

The litigation was eventually resolved.

Brickman said he won the lawsuit and the details of the settlement have to remain confidential. He eventually resigned as chairman of the board of directors in 2009.

"I'm not a shyster. The allegations against me were not true and the company that sued me settled with me. I'm actually well-respected in the Kitchener-Waterloo area."

Jamieson said he hired a lawyer to look into Brickman's background before taking his proposal seriously.

"We know what his background is," said Jamieson. "What you'll find is a reputa-

tion of a person who is a pioneer in his field."

Longboat said she didn't want to be making revenue off of "somebody else's addiction."

One community member who didn't want to be identified wondered if she was wasting her time being at the meeting because she is a traditional follower and won't be voting in the referendum.

Another traditional community member was worried that the government would hound Six Nations for tax revenues on the beer sales because it will be sold tax-free to both natives and non-natives.

She also said she sees the passing of such a regulation resulting in more drunk driving incidents, more cases of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder on the territory and that it will make Six Nations into a "laughingstock."

The brewery will sell alcohol right out of the facility and to provincial retailers, as well.

Longboat says she believes the general consensus has been no so far.

"How many no's do you need?"

Longboat was also worried that if the community didn't agree to the regulations or brewery, that elected council would try to revive the issue again a few years down the road.

Elected Chief Ava Hill said if the vote is no, it will stay that way (for her term) and not come back again for another vote.

A young community member expressed doubt about whether or not people will even follow the regulation and said community members will have easier access to alcohol with the brewery located on the reserve.

Jamieson said the implementation of a Six Nations-based law is a "huge first step" to asserting sovereignty over liquor laws. He also said that people who choose not to



SNED director Matt Jamieson defends Jim Brickman who is partnering with band council to put a brewery in the Oneida Business Park, if alcohol regulations are passed. (Photo by Donna Durie)

abide by the Six Nations alcohol law won't be "insulated" by the Six Nations law and will be subject to provincial regulations.

Others called the proposed brewery an "attack" on their "ancestors, children and future generations."

Longboat said enforcing regulations will be tough.

"We can't even administer our own by-laws we have now. I can't understand how we can even think of this project. I'm totally against a brewery."

Others wondered if Six Nations would be on the hook for losses if the project proves to be a flop.

Six Nations stands to own 90 per cent of the equity in the brewery, with an estimated yearly profit of \$2.2 million to \$4 million. Additionally, as much as 145 jobs could be created.

It would also mean a water main expansion from Stonieridge to Oneida Business Park along Fourth Line Road to enable the operation of the brewery. IPA is offering \$2 million toward that expansion.

Brickman told community members if the project flops, he takes the entire risk, not the community.

"If it flops, it's our problem." Six Nations Community Planner Amy Lickers said the discussion about regulations started because a Six Nations woman is currently in a Brantford court contesting whether or not provincial liquor laws apply on the territory.

Diane Bomberry is the owner of Yogi's Barn, which was subjected to a raid by Six Nations Police last year amid allegations of underage drinking. "That's where this whole discussion comes from," said Lickers.

The brewery proposal is not going to a vote. It will be decided through comment cards handed out by economic development. But the brewery moving forward is contingent on the community voting in favour of alcohol regulations that will permit the sale, manufacture and distribution of alcohol on the territory.

A commission of community members would be formed to oversee the implementation of the law, which could include rules, regulations, and the issuing of fines and permits.

Lickers said she understands alcohol is a touchy subject on Six Nations.

"We did know that alcohol is a concern in the community. There probably isn't anyone really that hasn't been impacted by alcohol."

Lickers said the referendum results will be based on participation and not on the number of people on the Six Nations' voters' list.

Economic development is about halfway through the project's engagement session, and the feedback so far has addressed a number of concerns, according to Lickers:

- alcoholism within the community
- people feel alcohol is not in line with Haudenosaunee val-

- ues and principles
- concerns on how the regulations would be enforced
- concerns of taxation
- concerns with impaired driving

- suggestions that instead of operating a brewery at OBP, use it to grow food instead
- there needs to be more manufacturing jobs in the community

Monies earned from the project will go towards an economic development trust that will be overseen by a board of community members. The trust is going to call for board members in the new year. There are five more meetings left before the Jan. 17 referendum.