

Men's Fire brokers talks with developers

By Jim Windle
SIX NATIONS/
BRANTFORD

The Haudenosaunee Men's Fire tried to broker an agreement with two developers who have had their housing projects stopped by Six Nations counter actions over the past three weeks.

Friday, Empire Homes' site supervisor to a large project located at Conklin Road and Blackburn Ave. in West Brant, met with Gene Johns

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Chief Bill Montour was able to work out a temporary stay of work on the site with Empire until the missed meeting was rescheduled for either Thursday or Wednesday of this week. Even so, several construction workers came

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Brooder's clients are going to be sued almost immediately unless this development goes ahead. According to him, the developers came to Six Nations to see if there is any scenario that could see this development go ahead and avoid the impending legal actions by people who have purchased in advance homes under the stipulation that these homes would be completed by a certain date. This has made seeking solu-



The Men's Fire, through spokesperson Gene Johns, invited the parties together to open dialogue that all parties hope will lead to an agreement in principle and defuse the growing tensions between Brantford and Six Nations.

representing the Men's Fire in Brantford. It was a meeting that was supposed to include Elected Chief Bill Montour and someone representing the Confederacy Chiefs. Unfortunately Montour was involved in an emergency meeting regarding Thursday's attempted Smoke hut closure.

"The Confederacy Chiefs were preparing for this week's longhouse meeting, and it was very much last minute," he said of their no-show.

Besides, this is an issue the Haudenosaunee Development Institute has the Confederacy mandate to deal with.

Either way, the planned meeting was scrubbed even though Empire was at the table willing and waiting. An issue arose Thursday morning when excavators and dump trucks were seen working at the back of the site. Johns and site supervisor Ed English did a drive around of the area. It was explained to Johns that the work being done had to do with silt management in advance of the predicted warmer weather. Ditches were being dug and sediment from the containment ponds was being reworked into the soil.

Johns, who works in construction himself, was satisfied with the explanation English offered and defused the situation before it could gather any momentum.

ready to resume work Monday morning but were met by members of the Men's Fire who would not allow them onto the site. Empire eventually sent all of the workers home again.

The second meeting of the day on Friday took place at the Six Nations Community Hall board room between Valley Estates and a wide representation from Six Nations, including Elected Chief Bill Montour, Confederacy Chief Allen MacNaughton, the Men's Fire, and the Mohawk Workers. The Valley Estates project is located near the Empire site but on the east side of Mt. Pleasant Road. They have been shut down as well by the Men's Fire and other supporters.

Representing Valley Estates is a familiar name. Michael Brooder was the lawyer for Henco who handled the sale and transfer of the former Douglas Creek Estates near Caledonia over to the province in 2006 when Six Nations stopped that project in its tracks.

Although media was not allowed into the meeting, reports from all sides were hopeful that some kind of creative approach could possibly break the log jam in a way that is mutually beneficial and without Six Nations relinquishing land while the claims are being dealt with in

tions with Six Nations much higher on their priority list.

A number of issues were discussed behind closed doors with the Valley Estates people including a brief history of the people and the lands of Six Nations. Also a brief overview of the governmental intricacies that make up the unique political dynamic that is Six Nations.

It was somewhat an eye opener and helped the visitors understand better who's who.

"The meeting was only designed to get people talking," according to Dick Hill. "That's what it has done."

But part of those talks included an inner caucus amongst the different elements represented with their guests asked to leave the room for a few moments. According to insiders, there was much discussion but the end result was a mandate agreed to by all parties that Phil Monture float his proposal as published in the January 28th edition of the Tekawennake on behalf of all groups represented.

It was a harder decision for Allen MacNaughton than for the rest considering the Haudenosaunee Development Institute, a creation of the Confederacy, was being essentially elbowed out of the process. Valley expressed frustration and confusion in trying to deal with the HDI



A cross section of Six Nations' interests met with representatives of Valley Estates, whose large construction site located on Mt. Pleasant Street in Brantford has been shut down for weeks. Creative solutions were discussed that could possibly be a breakthrough for both sides. Meetings continue between lawyer Michael Brooder and Phil Monture who was given the mandate by all Six Nations' parties present to try to work out a plan that would be mutually acceptable, without Six Nations conceding an inch of land. (Photo by Jim Windle)

as have many other developers and was hoping to find another way.

By most accounts, the concept of the HDI is sound and is something that is very much needed at this time. But, the approach being offered to developers by the present directors has been questioned by people in both communities. MacNaughton, we are told, defended the HDI and challenged those who spoke against it to get involved if they don't like the way it's going.

Although the present directors, have had a mandate to replace themselves with a broader community base of involvement, this is yet to happen, which is one of the main stumbling blocks to the HDI being more broadly accepted by the community at large.

When the visitors returned to the meeting, they introduced Monture and suggested they listen to his proposal, which is based on the 1997 agreement reached at the time between Brantford's Mayor Chris Friel and Six Nations concerning the crossing of the Grand River with a sewer line.

Monture believes that by using this agreement as a template, a mutually acceptable plan can be designed without the direct input of the slow moving federals and the equally slow moving province.

Monture made it perfectly clear, however, that a ratification by the people of Six Nations would still be necessary if any such agreement could be worked out. The Valley Estate people met right away with Monture to set up ongoing meetings to discuss the proposal.

"It may not work for you

and if that is the case, we can shake hands and you will have to do what you have to do. We will understand that," Monture told the Valley delegation.

Brooder considered the meeting a very important first step and promised the proposal put forward by Monture to-

wards a workable plan would be discussed at length with his clients. There was a definite sense of urgency expressed by Valley Estates that these meetings begin right away.

This same proposal will be placed in front of Empire Homes when the parties meet later this week.