

?Green for Green? campaign raises money for Highland Gate defence

By Brock Weir

The Ontario Municipal Board decision on the future of the proposed redevelopment of Highland Gate Golf Course could have wide reaching impacts in Aurora and the affected homeowners are pooling their resources to mount a good defence at upcoming hearings.

The Highland Gate Ratepayers Association is less than a month into their ?Green for Green? campaign, which has street captains canvassing the neighbourhood to get involved and ?step up financially? to help them along their way to a \$200,000 goal for proper representation at the Board.

?The Green for Green Fund has gotten off to a great start,? says Susan Walmer of the Highland Gate Ratepayers Association. ?We are well underway to that goal.?

Ms. Walmer wouldn't release the exact numbers, but she says they are confident they are on target.

Literature distributed on the campaign notes that if the 345 households in the Highland Gate area contributed \$600 each, that would take them over the top to \$207,000.

The idea for Green for Green was born out of the uncertainty surrounding the redevelopment application before Highland Gate Developments Inc. triggered the OMB appeal last year.

Once the path was clear, Ms. Walmer says the Ratepayers voted ?overwhelmingly? to take action and seek party status at the hearings.

?Along with that came responsibilities and needing funds to be professionally supported at that hearing,? Ms. Walmer explains. ?We grappled with [whether the Green for Green campaign should focus strictly on the Highland Gate area or the wider Aurora community] at our Board. Right now we are staying focused on our community, but we have had some members from outside our community reach out to us both financially and in support of what is going on.

?From a Town-wide perspective, there are issues and some precedents that could be set with this development. Those precedents, once they are set, could impact the rest of Aurora and how it develops in the future. Our next steps will be looking within our community first. We recognize the community is directly impacted, but we will be reaching out to the wider community. The next pre-hearing is not until August, so we will get a better idea over the next couple of months, as the lawyers talk, as to what our costs might be, depending on whether it is done in mediation. [The developers] asked for a six week hearing and that is a significantly larger cost attached for everyone.?

Looking over last week's pre-hearing, Ms. Walmer says she believes the Town was ?very well represented,? but their external counsel was ?firm? in how they wanted to see the hearing unfold.

?We know this is an issue here in Aurora for this golf course and for this golf course infill, but we also think it is a wider-spread issue across all of the GTA,? she concludes. ?It is something that is impacting us now, but could impact a lot more people in the future.?

For more information on the campaign, email membership.hgrpa@gmail.com.