

Highland Gate redevelopment headed to OMB



By Brock Weir

Proposals to transform the former Highland Gate Golf Course into a 180+ unit housing development and condo complex are bound for an appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Highland Gate Developments Inc. formally filed their appeal Tuesday afternoon after earlier informing the Highland Gate Ratepayers Group they were headed in this direction.

According to Cheryl Shindruk, Executive Vice President of Land Development for Geranium Corporation, the company which has partnered with landowner ClubLink, the move came after experiencing a perceived delay at the last Public Planning meeting devoted to the proposal on October 28.

"We have now had three statutory public meetings and a community information meeting and at the last meeting, the staff report recommended staff now be directed to go and prepare a comprehensive report with recommendations and options and bring that back to Council because the review process is complete and there is no further technical work to be done on the applications," Ms. Shindruk tells The Auroran. "Council selected instead to schedule another public planning meeting on a date yet to be determined.

"We have had ample consultation with the ratepayers' association, the residents, the public meetings, the technical work is complete, the review process is complete, and we just felt it was time to exercise our right to go to the OMB. We had hoped not to do that. We were hopeful Council would make a decision. That did not happen, so this is where we are today."

Ms. Shindruk characterizes the discussion process as one which has been fraught with "starts and stops," but says she remains hopeful discussions will be able to resume and out of those discussions with them will be a "meeting of the minds."

If they are looking for a "meeting of the minds", they may have found one on disappointment. Dave Newton, President of the Highland Gate Ratepayers Group, says they had been planning a meeting with the developers and the Town this Thursday, November 19, but after that proved unfeasible due to a scheduling conflict the ratepayers suggested shifting talks to November 25.

"That is what I believed we were working toward," says Mr. Newton. "However, today I have been told they have used that as cancellation in its entirety and have decided they would like to exercise their right to go to the Board. This is not something I was hoping for. I was hoping for a different resolution, but they have the right to take it down this road.

"This has been a long process thus far. We had hoped we would be able to continue to develop a counter-proposal and at this point we are still going to do so. However, it is [now] going to be in a much more formal process. We have a commitment to have something to the developers before December 1, so we are certainly committed to meeting that."

Over at Town Hall, there was also a degree of disappointment. Prior to Tuesday's announcement, Councillor Michael Thompson said news Highland Gate was heading in his direction was a missed opportunity.

?Obviously, if this goes to the OMB, I am disappointed a solution couldn't be found,? he said, looking to a redevelopment project on Vandorf Road and Industrial Parkway South as a good news story. ?I always look at Timberlane as the great example of us, Council, and Brookfield all working together to find a good solution.?

On Tuesday afternoon, after the Town received the appeal package from Highland Gate Developments, Mayor Dawe said he wanted to go through the extensive documents prior to providing further comment.