

# Brant News

## Opposition to development plan expressed at Hardy Road OMB hearing

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Politicians, residents, water engineers and native groups have lined up in opposition to the subdivisions proposed for the Hardy Road area.

During the first phase of an ongoing Ontario Municipal Board hearing at city hall, lawyers from developers Sifton Properties Ltd. and Grandview Estates Inc. have argued that the city unjustly withheld approval of plans for a subdivision at 277 Hardy Rd. and 125 Golf Rd. based on provisions in the waterfront master plan.

But city lawyer Ian Lord is trying to convince hearing officer Chris Conti that the developers did not perform "due diligence" in meeting environmental standards with their development plans.

At an evening hearing on Tuesday, participants - those who have registered to present evidence but are not able to cross-examine witnesses - got the chance to bring their concerns to Conti.

Golf Road resident Ingrid Masters, a member of the Hardy Road Area Citizens Committee, said that for three decades her family has enjoyed a ready supply of water from the area's high water table. She worries her water supply will be contaminated or cut off because of new infrastructure installed to service the new subdivisions.

"Nature has its own way of running water and draining land and I don't want anyone to mess with that," Masters said.

Concern about the water table is shared by the Grand River Conservation Authority. On Monday during the hearing, GRCA hydrogeologist Gregg Zwiers said that the development application should only be approved if the current groundwater situation can be maintained.

Blocking or altering the flow and direction of groundwater, which might happen when sewer lines are installed, could allow contaminants into the water and threaten the sustainability of the area's "highly unusual" ecological features and coldwater streams.

"In my opinion, it is likely true that there will be negative impacts on these features," Zwiers said.

GRCA water engineer Janet Engel called Sifton's stormwater plan "premature" and said environmental issues must still be addressed before any plan can be approved.

The hearing has generated attention at the provincial level. New Democrat MPP Jonah Schein, his party's environment critic, visited the Hardy Road area in May and again last month to show support for the city's waterfront master plan, which

recommends no development in the ecologically sensitive area.

"The Liberal government would rather wash their hands of this and leave this development's fate with the OMB," Schein said during a rally last month outside city hall. "They should show leadership and support the local voices and local community leaders who are concerned about development of the Hardy Road area."

On Nov. 13, city council voted to formally include the waterfront master plan - which had already been approved in principle - in a review of the official plan later this year. The master plan contains provisions to protect sourcewater and preserve the Grand River shoreline through responsible development.

Five representatives from the Haudenosaunee Onkwehonwe appeared at Tuesday's hearing to argue that native groups were not properly consulted during the creation of the Waterfront Master Plan.

The Haudenosaunee agree with the aim of the Waterfront Master Plan, but feel the city and developers paid little attention to native concerns about the site, which is said to include an ancient Mohawk settlement known as Davisville.

After the Haudenosaunee delegation spent two hours outlining the differences between native and non-native governance and exploring varying definitions of "consultation," Conti assured the group that, as a registered party in the hearing, they would have several opportunities to present evidence.

The first phase of the hearing ends Nov.

30.

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