

Brook Woods plan criticized

By Irene Chwalkowski, The Suburban

Pierrefonds residents opposed to the Brook Woods project took a stand at Monday night's council meeting, even as council approved plans for a development of 28 townhouses, plus four single-family units, for a total of 32 homes.

The homes will range in price from \$300K to \$420K. Council said the developer expects to break ground this December.

Residents say they do not want the project, which will be located on the site of Brook Woods, one of the last remaining greenspaces in Pierrefonds.

"I'm very angry. I am losing all my wildlife," said Rita, who would not give her last name. "We do not want this project. You are not listening to us."

Several people expressed their opinions by repeatedly shouting from the back of the room and borough mayor Monique Worth reminded them they had to register their questions, or they would be asked to leave.

Worth told residents that 120 invitations to a public consultation meeting last month were sent to people most affected by the project. "Less than 60 people showed up," she said. Several residents contradicted Worth, saying that there were at least 100 people at the meeting.

The plan adopted by council, which is subject to architectural review, includes a new road, which allows access to Brook Street for residents of both Harvey and Nadon streets.

The road also means there are two exits for both streets, a concern brought forth at the CCU (conseil consultatif urbain/urban planning committee) meeting.

Councillor Bert Ward told The Suburban the configuration of the houses in earlier versions of the plan had to be changed in order to open up the street.

"A decision has been made that causes the least inconvenience to the residents," said Worth in response to repeated charges that the public consultation process was a sham. Residents requested a copy of the approved plan, which was the third option studied by the CCU and were told it would be made available Tuesday morning.

However, council released copies of the plan at the end of the meeting.

Councillor Christian Dubois said the city may be held liable if the borough refuses the developer's plans, especially since it meets all borough bylaws.

Resident Eric McCarty was upset after he saw a copy of the plan. "This is not even close to the plan discussed at the CCU meeting. How is that possible?"

McCarty said he fears the project will fail because people will not want to buy lateral three [townhouses] homes in this area.

"If you go out in western Pierrefonds, there are [entire] streets with just lateral three houses. People who buy lateral three homes move there from another part of the city. They like the look," he said.

"They [council] say these houses will fit into the neighbourhood — they don't," he said. "There are expensive homes all around the project."

David Fletcher of The Green Coalition said that he was appalled by what he calls the autocracy of city council.

"This is not democracy," he said. "Democracy involves transparency."

Responding to Dubois' comment about possible city liability if they refuse the developer's plan, Fletcher invoked a Supreme court decision that gave the town of Frelighsberg the right to refuse a development project if it was in the best interests of the citizens. A greenspace was saved in that town as a consequence of this decision. The Green Coalition says that the Frelighsberg decision sets a precedent for municipalities who can stop development and escape liability.