

NEWS NORFOLK & REGION

Hastings Drive property owners speak up



By Jacob Robinson, Simcoe Reformer
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A meeting for land and cottage owners to express their views on what should be done regarding zoning for a portion of Hastings Drive in Long Point was held at the St. Williams Community Centre Friday, September 4, 2015. Among those taking part were cottage/land owner Domenica Misale, left, and cottage owner Nicole Adams. JACOB ROBINSON/Simcoe Reformer

ST. WILLIAMS - One relatively small piece of land is cause for big concern in Norfolk County.

Friday marked the first of public meetings for land and cottage owners to express their thoughts on what should be done with a portion of Hastings Drive in Long Point.

A 1985 storm destroyed 16 cottages on the road, and the former Haldimand-Norfolk Region reacted by imposing a hazard land designation on Hastings. The designation forbids development or occupation of affected properties located west of 43 Hastings Dr. Cottages that survived the storm were exempt.

Recently, Norfolk council revisited the issue, and has hired Kitchener consulting firm MacNaughton Hermsen Britton Clarkson Planning Ltd. to recommend the best course of action. Representatives Pierre Chauvin (project manager) and Dan Currie (facilitator) met with land and cottage owners at the St. Williams Community Centre.

“We're here to first of all listen to what people have to say and what their issues are, and then based on that information, come up with some options and recommendations for council to consider,” Chauvin said just before the meeting began.

“We're not coming in with any preconceived ideas or recommendations ... the more information we get through this and the consultation process, it will lead to a better outcome.”

The outcome – one to be ultimately decided by Norfolk County council – is sure to be hotly contested. Some would like to see the zoning changed to make room for residential development, as well as recreational camping, while others are worried the area's ecosystem – one of the most diverse in the province – would take a hit if such things were to occur.

The first of two Friday sessions included about 50 attendees. One was Laura Jerome, an Ancaster resident whose grandfather built family cottage on Hastings over 60 years ago. It survived the 1985 storm, but burned down shortly thereafter.

Jerome feels her rights have been taken away by the zone ruling.

“They've held it out for over 35 years as park land. Where's the park? There's no park, it's never going to be a park, it can't be a park. So enough – give us our property rights back,” she said. “If I put what we paid for that lot in today's figures, it's well over \$200,000 that we have invested, so I'm tired of people telling me I have a \$5,000 lot.”

Jerome wasn't alone in her opposition towards area zoning. One man chastised the entire process (which is budgeted for \$35,000) saying that private property distinction should give land owners the right to do as they see fit.

“I want the same usage that you have at your house, or what Mayor (Charlie) Luke has,” Jerome added.

The study and its findings will be presented to council in the coming months, with a decision date set for Feb. 23.

-- with files from Monte Sonnenberg

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