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Waterline

Town's people speak out  
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From Sept 15

THEDFORD- A group of Bosanquet residents who are opposed to the re-routing of the Highway 21 waterline voiced their concerns loud and clear at Monday's council meeting.

After an hour the thirty angry people didn't feel their concerns were suitably addressed but were appeased when council did pass a motion agreeing to hold a public meeting before making any more decisions regarding the alignment.

"People were shocked and appalled," spokesperson Mary Hill told council referring to the frustration of having to read about the realignment in the local papers. She asked mayor Fred Thomas if he had planned on letting the public know about the changes, "using tax payers money." He replied that the media was at the meeting and it was public.

Hill presented council with a lengthy petition objecting to the re-routing of the project.

"This town is being held hostage by threats of three people. We say 'no' and want to know when you are going to hold a public meeting," she said.

At a meeting earlier this month council agreed to have the Ontario Clean Water Agency proceed with design and tendering for the alternate route for the waterline. The added cost would go to the ratepayers. The project, which was originally designed to go down Highway 21, had been disrupted last year by native occupiers in front of the former army camp. At the June 3 1996 meeting council decided in spite of the disruption the preferred option would be to install the line as was originally planned. Since then council has split on their original decision.

At Monday's meeting Thomas said OCWA is now reluctant to go the Highway 21 route because of public safety and says Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MP Rose -Marie Ur and Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien support the alignment. Thomas said, as he has many times that no one in this council want the burden of the waterline project to be put on the taxpayers. Hill asked why they decided the project needed to be re-routed.

"A few natives threatened the contractors," answered Thomas.

"And you are changing the project for them?" asked Hill adding that it is a public highway and explained the OPP said they will protect workers if there are any problem "If the need arises I will protect the contractors," she said with a thundering response from the forum.

Ipperwash resident Richard Schultz told council that if OCWA is not prepared to go the original route, it should be them who pay the extra, not the taxpayers. In a discussion in April it was confirmed that it is an OCWA decision as to when to proceed with the installation and where. At that time council was advised that if they wanted the line re-located, there would not be any grants available.

Coun. Bill Graham told the group that he had voted to go down the highway and not spend one more penny.

"Three people stopped this alignment and if we are in a position where our OPP can't protect a contractor on a public highway we are in trouble."

Coun. John Walsh told the forum that he voted for the alignment showing concern for the residents. He said if there is a fire he can't protect the Ipperwash people without a waterline. He added that the pipe is deteriorating because of weather related elements and

felt if they waited much longer the cost could be higher and his decision was for the good of the people of Bosanquet. Ipperwash resident Mike McClemont did not agree,

"We have spent years listening to people say this or that is good for us. We're sick of being told what is good for us."

Coun. Gary Vance said he understood or had a good idea how the people felt but asked what would happen if OCWA pushed through and "those three people brought an army in and a cop got killed."

"Keep making excuses for them," said Hill, "Three people come out and say, 'get out' and you do it. I am so disappointed with this council."

Coun. Raymond Wight was defeated when he informed the group that if it wasn't for the present council there would not be a waterline project. They reminded him of a public meeting in 1995 where 75 per cent of the population were opposed to the new waterline and it went forward anyway.

Over loud objections council tried to explain the alignment was for the safety of the people. Roland LaPratte didn't buy into their theory,

"We live this hostage situation everyday. It is time to stand up. You can run off the mouth if you want." Council asked if this was a war or a waterline. LaPratte answered they could call it whatever they wanted but the public wanted to be involved where "their" money was concerned.

"I'm sympathetic that three people can hold the town hostage but where do we go?" asked Thomas. Resident Steve Hill asked if the province was planning on re-routing Highway 21. Thomas suggested the people talk to their MP and MPP to which the forum's response was laughter.

Council would like to see a letter in writing from the OPP assuring the safety of contractors if the Highway 21 plan continues. Thomas guaranteed that a public meeting will be called before they go forward. He said in the interim the design of the alternate route will go ahead and they will wait for the feds to kick in the funding.

No one at the former army base could be reached for comment.-30-