

# Glen Williams residents likely to be disappointed at upcoming OMB development hearing

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Residents in Glen Williams remain unhappy with a recent decision by council to allow an unpopular residential development in the Halton Hills hamlet to move forward.

The 31-home development by Eden Oak Creditview Heights Inc., currently under review by Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), [met stiff resistance at a Jan. 24 special meeting of council](#) at Town Hall.

At least two delegations, including the Glen Williams Community Association (GWCA), are scheduled to speak at a Feb. 27 hearing at the OMB on the matter, after expressing frustration with the town's public review and input process.

However, according to Halton Hills mayor Rick Bonette, the odds of a reversal by the OMB at this point are almost nonexistent. But that's not stopping residents from taking their case to the hearing anyway.

"Our position would the residents of Halton Hills expect to be involved in the planning of their communities, and certainly that's the case here in Glen Williams," said GWCA board president Drew Leverette, who has lived in the Glen for more than 30 years.

According to Leverette, the town only held two official public meetings regarding the proposed subdivision over a seven-year period. A third meeting was organized by the GWCA.

"The current system of subdivision applications, the way it's handled, really does not allow the public to engage in a meaningful manner," he said.

"Then we come up to the Jan. 24 (staff) report. The report (was) published and the public (had) two days to register to speak (in front of council) and four days to read and digest and prepare their presentation," said Leverette, adding resident stakeholders set to speak at the upcoming OMB hearing were also only given two weeks to review thousands of documents ahead of the hearing.

Approximately 100 residents packed council chambers as town officials heard from several delegations, all of which expressed concern over lack of public involvement in the planning process.

Those concerns prompted council and the mayor to order a review of the town's public consultation and communications practices by staff, who are expected to bring their findings to council at its March meeting.

Ultimately council voted 9-1 to allow the development after town staff and lawyers negotiated dozens of concessions with the developer in hopes of making it more palatable to concerned residents.

Among them were an upgraded elevated drainage pond to satisfy flooding concerns, the retention and addition of a number of trees originally slated for removal, the placement of retaining walls, a reduction in the number of homes and size of lots, a reconfiguration of the block setup, as well as an agreement to return some of the lands to public ownership upon completion of the project.

"These were all issues I felt needed to be addressed, and in my opinion they have been addressed. The plan is greatly improved to my mind." said councillor Jane Fogal, adding the lands in question have long been earmarked for residential development by both the town and region.

“Given that there has to be a development here, there are going to be houses here. I know (one of the delegates) said these were going to be monster homes and another said it would be a high-density development, but you can’t do both. It has to be one or the other and I think we found a balance,” she added.

And therein, according to the mayor, lies the problem with the residents’ chances at the OMB. Council’s vote to approve the project was predicated in large part by the fact the developer appealed to the OMB, which essentially removes council from the decision-making process.

Town attorney Jeffrey Wilker explained at the Jan. 24 meeting that because of provincial law, the decision is now out of council’s hands.

He added should the town decide to fight its own expert and staff recommendations at the OMB hearings, not only would it likely lose, but also possibly spend a lot of money only to lose all the concessions negotiated by staff with the developer.

“I think the alternative, as suggested, we would be losing a lot more by going to the OMB. I think the staff have done a great job along with Jeff Wilker to get some of the concessions that we have and I’m going to be supporting the recommendation,” said the mayor,

The mayor added, at this point, the OMB hearing will be more about formalizing the agreement between the town and developer than considering new evidence or looking to overturn the application.

Despite the uphill battle facing them, the GWCA is intent on having their voices and remaining concerns heard by the OMB, and hope at the very least to be included more heavily in the planning of future developments — two more of which may be on the way on other lands currently owned by Eden Oak in Glen Williams.

“We would hope that going forward, we can work with the town to improve the public engagement process for future developments in Glen Williams and across Halton Hills,” said Leverette.

In response, Mayor Bonnette assured residents the communications and consultation review is well underway and council is committed to improving the system where necessary and possible.