

Chief & Council Community Open House Overview

March 20, 2025

Summary:

The discussions centered on several key initiatives and concerns affecting the community. A new website is being developed to enhance communication, featuring public and exclusive sections for band members, important documents, updates, a community calendar, and a mobile app for real-time notifications. Updates on community projects included the construction of a cultural multi-purpose building, and renovations at the Employment and Training Centre aimed at supporting skills development in trades. Insights into the Eastern Boundary case were provided, noting a favorable ruling in the Court of Appeal regarding land ownership, while also addressing ongoing legal matters related to compensation for historical injustices.

Security issues were a significant concern, with the need for better security measures. Concerns raised alarms about the sale of drugs and the implications of non-band members on community safety.

The conversation also included the Beach Committee's efforts to develop a parking plan for the beach area, aiming to generate revenue while ensuring responsible land stewardship, and the necessity for environmental remediation before returning the land to Saugeen. Overall, the meeting highlighted the community's focus on development, legal matters, security, and safety concerns.

Discussion Overview on Community Updates:

Website and Communication Tools

Our new community website is now live and will feature a public page and a secure section for band members, requiring registration for access. The website will host documents, updates, and a community calendar, while an accompanying mobile app will allow members to receive real-time notifications. Additionally, a communication specialist will be hired to improve information dissemination within the community.

Community Development and Infrastructure

Cultural/multi-purpose building is currently under construction, this space will allow opportunities for staff and community members to utilize the building at no cost for community gatherings. Renovations at the Employment and Training Centre are also planned to enhance training for trades and plans are in the works to begin completing the amphitheatre gardens, with opportunity for members to gain their red seal in the brick and masonry program. A Family and Child Welfare building is currently under the predesign phase and will house our new staff for our Zaagidiwin Child and Family Wellbeing Law. Furthermore, efforts are underway to establish a local police presence, with a letter of intent submitted to the province for funding a needs assessment.

Update on Eastern Boundary Case

The recent victory in the Eastern Boundary case was discussed, where the Court of Appeal ruled in favor of Saugeen, confirming the land's status. The town and Ontario have requested leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, but the likelihood of the case being accepted is uncertain. Additionally, it was ruled by the Court of Appeal that the town and Ontario should share the costs incurred by Saugeen during the litigation.

Land Compensation Issues

The legal case concerning land ownership and compensation for Saugeen was outlined, highlighting the importance of establishing land ownership before discussing compensation. The hope is to avoid litigation, with Canada supporting Saugeen's position. It was stressed that the historical financial losses incurred by the community necessitate fair compensation.

Beach Committee Updates and Land Management

Beach Committee has been working on several initiatives, including a parking plan that could generate revenue while maintaining stewardship of the land. It was highlighted that the transition of management responsibilities between the Beach Committee and Economic Development Committee is important for harmonizing their efforts. Additionally, the need for environmental remediation of the beach area was noted, particularly concerning the washrooms and wastewater drainage.

Policing and Community Safety

The need for proper policing was highlighted, with criticism directed at the current security personnel for their lack of effectiveness and awareness. A recent break-in incident involving a grandson was recounted, underscoring the urgency for better law enforcement. The sentiment was supported by other members. Issues regarding the sale of toxic drugs and the dangers posed by gangs and prostitution were raised. The importance of community-based policing was emphasized, and it was noted that Canada had previously failed to provide adequate funding for First Nations. Recent shifts in funding commitments were mentioned, along with the need for a needs assessment involving community input.

Strategic Planning

A question was raised that there are many priorities and activities identified within the strategic plan, causing a concern for the ability to carry out the work. Reassurance was made that it's a living document meant to create and outline goals helping to create a road map for the community and that enhanced communication and collaboration between council and administration will lead to the success of the activities within the plan. Furthermore, logistics, capacity and finances may impact our ability to carry out some of the activities, but best efforts will be made.