

ClubLink executive argues better use for Kanata Lakes golf course

BY PATRICK UGUCCIONI

ClubLink has come out of its corners swinging in the fight over the future of the Kanata Lakes Golf and Country Club.

The operator of the Kanata Lakes golf course shocked the community 10 days before Christmas announcing it will pursue options for alternative use of the golf course lands. To that end, ClubLink has partnered with Minto and Richcraft to assist with redevelopment plans for the property.

Robert Visentin, vice president of investment at ClubLink, says there is an opportunity to better utilize the 70 hectares of land to meet the interests of the community.

He said in an interview last week those who don't believe the golf industry is in decline need to educate themselves.

"For people to say the golf business is healthy is a bit of not knowing the facts," he told Your Community Voice.

Harkening back to his initial statement before Christmas, Visentin repeated that golf courses across the country are struggling, particularly in saturated markets like Ottawa.

"We don't see that correcting itself any time soon," said Visentin. "The question is what does the future hold."

Chatter from Kanata Lakes residents on social media, notably those backing on to the course, is a feeling of betrayal considering many paid five and six-figure premiums for their unobstructed view of the greenspace.

"That's part of the conversation ClubLink is hoping to have with people in terms of how we mitigate the current view they have to what they're going to be looking at if we are successful, but you can't do that without having a conversation," said Visentin. "We're hoping (to accomplish that) through buffering or some other greenspace value."

"I think the other thing that we're proposing is that we're

converting stuff that is only being used part-time into being used year-round and being available to the community at large, where right now it is only available in the summer to golfers."

No development application has been filed with the city.

When that might happen "really kind of depends on how the conversation takes place between the community, the city and ourselves. And when I say ourselves, I mean ClubLink, Minto and Richcraft and how that conversation takes place," said Visentin.

A 1981 agreement between the former City of Kanata and the golf course operator of the day puts in dispute whether any development can take place on the greenspace.

Kanata North Coun. Jenna Sudds argues her layperson's reading of the original and amended agreements is that ownership is to revert to the city should the proprietor walk away

from the business.

Valentin disagrees.

"We made a statement that we think development is allowable and the city has said that is going to do a review of that and see whether they concur or don't concur," he said. "Until we get that answer it is going to be difficult to tell what the next steps are. We're doing this one step at a time."

About 100 volunteers joined

the councillor on a bitterly cold day Sunday, January 13 to go door-to-door in Kanata Lakes to raise awareness of the issue.

Sudds, who was joined by Stittsville Coun. Glen Gower for the community rally, estimates her team of volunteers reached approximately 1,500 homes.

"I'd say 95 per cent of people were aware of the issue," she said of the response at the doors.

Of the homeowners the

councillor spoke to directly, she says all were opposed to any development on the greenspace.

"There was a general frustration this is even being contemplated," she said.

Sudds held a townhall Jan. 21. at the Mlacak Centre to give the community the opportunity to speak their mind on the issue. The meeting was held after Your Community Voice went to press.

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