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Mastiff shelter bites back

By Oona Woods

A dogged dispute over a canine rescue centre in Masham will have its day in court Sept. 29. The case of Valley Boxer & Mastiff Rescue versus La Pêche Municipality reportedly claims over \$500,000 in costs due to stress and lost earnings following the council’s refusal to extend a permit for the sanctuary.

The saga has been ongoing since 2009, when the centre opened with the necessary paperwork. Sanctuary owner France Turcotte told the Low Down earlier this year she has rescued as many as 85 dogs over the years, and the centre has received support from established figures like Don Cherry and Ottawa Senators Coach Brian Murray.

But the good work has been offset by an unstable relationship with neighbours. Turcotte relates stories of a fake bomb threat that shut down her road, intimidation of volunteers, and threats of using a bear trap on the already traumatized dogs. She has said that her own relationship broke down over the strain of constant conflict and she has had to leave town for the Ontario side.

In 2011, the municipality became directly involved when a blanket ban on five breeds was implemented. The list includes

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WORST JOKE OF THE WEEK

What do you call a magic dog?
A Labracadabrador.

Horses do the heavy lifting



Roland Lapointe holds the reigns as “Mike” and “Light” struggle to haul 5,500 lbs across the line at the Kazabazua Horse Pull and Rodeo Sept. 20. The heavy horse pull was just one of the events, read more Page 2 Sheri Johnston photo

ER hours can’t be cut; doctors ring alarm bell

By Anastasia Philopoulos

Stuck between a rock and a hard place is where you’ll find the Des Collines health board these days.

In an effort to meet budget cuts demanded by the Ministry of Health, the regional health

board has even considered cutting overtime hours in its already maxed out emergency room.

At the board’s Sept. 17 monthly meeting, it was revealed that while overtime (most of which occurs in Wakefield’s emergency room) could not be touched in

this round of budget cuts, it had been considered months earlier.

“We just can’t do it,” board member Ned Ellis told the room.

President of the board Michel Lafrenière later confirmed that while decisions remained on where the Des Collines health board would cut, the emergency

room would hopefully be spared.

“We’re cutting everywhere. The only place we are avoiding cuts is with regards to emergency because of the nature [of] the services,” Lafrenière told the Low Down.

Despite deep cuts and desper-

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Wakefield to see 200 more homes

By Anastasia Philopoulos

Two developers have joined forces to present a unified vision for the Wakefield South area, including almost 200 new homes.

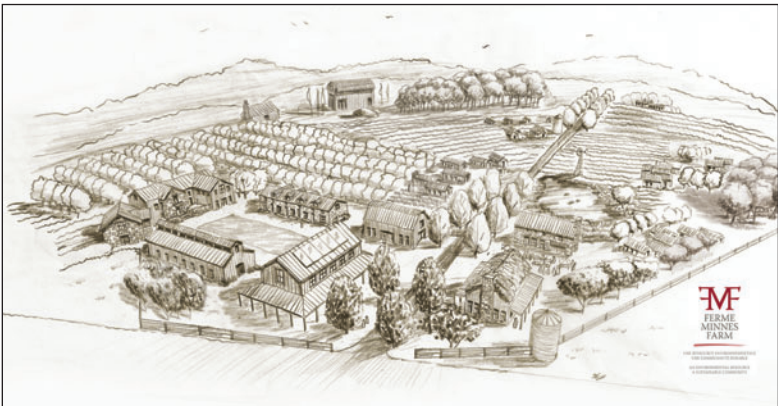
On Wednesday, Sept. 17, Ferme Minnes Farms owner and developer Christopher Minnes presented the concept for his 161 acres of land, alongside first time developers Versant Riverside, who detailed plans for their 85 acres.

The three men behind Versant Riverside – Jean-Francois

Touchet, Louis-Charles Touchet, and Marc-André Séguin – bought the property formerly owned by the Dirnberger family about three years ago; around the same time, they started informally chatting with Minnes.

While project planning legally remains separate, the two camps have collaborated on several key points, and share a similar and integrated vision that has been presented to the municipality’s urbanism committee.

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Artist’s rendition of the entrance to Minnes Farms housing development from Hwy 105 just south of Valley Drive. The larger buildings facing Hwy 105 will be mixed use commercial; what Chris Minnes hopes will become an artisan village. Image courtesy Minnes Farms

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From Page 1

Housing to join Wakefield enviro campus

About 35 people attended the public meeting at Wakefield Centre, where both groups got a chance to outline their plans.

Jean-Francois Touchet, who hails from Cantley and works as an urban planner in Gatineau, led the crowd through Versant Riverside, which plans 70 units comprising one-acre wooded lots, as well as six buildings of six units each. A number of bike paths, community trails, and a public dock have been planned, and an ecological corridor will remain protected.

About 70 per cent of the forest on Versant Riverside will be preserved and Touchet stresses that maintaining the natural habitat was an important consideration for the trio.

“It’s why we bought this land – not only to do development, but to build a living community.”

Both projects propose sustainably built and thoughtfully placed homes, with low environmental impact.

Minnes Farms then unveiled their plans, which include 40 acres of protected farmland where environmental campus Eco Echo can continue its work. La Pêche council threatened to expropriate the land, which has been in the Minnes family since 1973, for a light industrial park back in 2011. A similar fate had befallen neighbouring Pharland family land, but in the face of Wakefield-led protests the municipality backed down.

Today, Minnes Farms is planning for 120 residential units, with 90,000 square feet of multifunction space reserved for commercial use at the entrance on Hwy 105. “I’m calling it an artisan village,” Minnes said.



A: Minnes Farms, 120 homes, 90,000 square feet of multifunction commercial space, 13 acres of public green space and 40 acres of farmland for Eco Echo environmental campus use (total 161 acres)
B: Versant Riverside: 70 homes on one-acre wooded lots, six buildings of six units each (total 85 acres)
C: Franklin Estates (no plans for development as of yet)
Image courtesy Minnes Farms

“We have many local artisans constrained either by the short season at the farmer’s market or entrepreneurs seeking a location to make or sell their products . . . we want to offer space for a variety of uses in the multifunctional [sector] complementing what’s already available in the village.”

About 13 acres of space will be reserved for a public park and Minnes Farms will apply for a

zoning change to build homes in clusters, where more than one home will be built per acre, in an effort to conserve land. “A lot of times people think of integrated projects or clustering as a way to have more densities but that’s not what we’re doing,” said Minnes Farms consultant Michel Lacasse.

A smaller front or back

When completed, the Minnes Farms and Versant Riverside projects will attract an estimated 400 to 500 new residents to Wakefield.

yard, means more of the natural habitat and farmland owned by Minnes Farms will remain intact and accessible for all who live in the community. “In addition to the 40 acres we’re preserving [for Eco Echo] programs, a full 53 acres is being completely protected in its natural state. Clustering a portion of the homes helps open up even more space,” Minnes said.

Lacasse adds that both Versant Riverside and Minnes Farms will be applying for the zoning change, hoping to offer a mix of clustering and the more traditional one-home-per-acre.

When completed, the projects will attract an estimated 400 to 500 new residents to Wakefield. To serve the increased population, both developers have proposed a collector, or main road, that would run from Riverside Road through both properties, connecting to Hwy 105 and built to municipal standards.

Councillor for Ward 6, Claude Giroux, emceed the evening and told the crowd it remains uncer-

tain whether the municipality would take on the proposed collector road. Giroux added that both projects were well received by the urbanism committee.

The municipality of La Pêche is currently developing its mater plan (PPU) for what it calls the Wakefield South area, which includes both proposed developments, as well as a third portion of land owned by the Franklin family, who at this time have no plans to develop.

Questions from the floor included concerns about clustering, questions about how lots would be sold, and how water and sewer would be handled. Septic systems and private wells will be built to service cluster or individual homes.

Tim O’Connor, who lives on Pine Ridge Road, asked whether any studies had yet been done on how digging an estimated 100 new wells would affect the aquifer.

“You’re talking about doubling the village’s population,” O’Connor said. “The wells are good now, but I’d like to see some serious studies.”

Neither developer has completed studies but both say it is in their plans if and when the projects are approved. Councillor Claude Giroux added that the water situation was also a prime concern for the municipality.

Currently, both development projects await a decision from council. Both developers are prepared to start first phases by spring 2015. Completed projects have been projected to take anywhere from 10 to 15 years to build and sell.

Kaz Rodeo brings them out in herds

by Sheri Johnston

What started out as a bunch of guys horsin’ around for fun has turned into an annual tradition that’s been around for so many years that no one remembers exactly how long (20 years is the consensus). The St. Stephen’s Anglican Church Horse Pull and Rodeo took the reins on Sept. 20 from 11:00 a.m. until the cows came home (after the rodeo there was music and a bar),

much to the delight of about 200 cowboys and cowgirls at the Kazabazua Community Hall on Begley Road.

The day started with the light horse pull, then the heavy horse pull, which was cut short due to heavy rains. At 4:30 p.m., a hot supper was served to more than 150 hungry folks – the feast featured ham, homemade baked beans, mashed potatoes, meatballs, salads, and plenty of

desserts. Following the supper, the rain stopped and the rodeo started. Events included barrel racing, around the ring, the flag, and the pick-up.

This year’s event was “the best year we’ve had in a long time,” said volunteer Margaret Gabie. Attendance was up even with the cloudburst that sent everyone scrambling for cover. All the money raised goes to St. Stephen’s Anglican Church.

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