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Elk Rapids council bones up on zoning, Preserve

Five fresh faces on the village council

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ELK RAPIDS — The new village council is doing a little homework, boning up on history — specifically, their Elk Rapids Preserve history.

Now with five fresh faces following a recall this year, the council plans a special meeting July 5 to discuss the Preserve development and related zoning issues in case the project rears its head again, village officials said.

Village president Bob Peterson described the 6 p.m. meeting as "an information session ... so they can be prepared" should the housing project, planned for a wetlands area near Grand Traverse Bay, appear on future meeting agendas.

"We'll give them documents (relating) to the development of that area, starting back as early as 1990. We probably won't have time to do it justice," Peterson said.

The housing development proposed by Bill Clous' Eastwood Custom Homes, of Traverse City, has a convoluted history. Federal officials got involved in 2004 after it was revealed that Clous, without a permit, filled an area of wetlands in preparation of construction.

There have since been lengthy negotiations with federal officials and multiple site plan updates.

Last summer, when the former council allowed Clous to alter the plan from single-family homes to duplex housing without first going back through the planning commission, residents began talking recall. In February, five of the seven council members were shown the door.

There is nothing connected with the preserve before the council, though Peterson said Clous approached city officials with updated plans since the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordered modifications this spring.

Peterson described drawings he's seen as conceptual.

The new village president, Dan Reszka, said the public is welcome to attend the July 5 session, to take place before the regular council meeting — but added that citizens should not expect a chance to speak.

"It's for us to talk about the issues and to learn about issues. We're trying to be prepared if this project comes back," he said.

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