

Gates must go: councillor

By Frank Matys

A city councillor is hoping to slam the door on gated communities.

"More and more, the wealthy ... are barricading themselves against us ordinary people," Don Evans said this week.

Evans raised the issue during a planning meeting focusing on a second phase of development proposed for Sophie's Landing.

The high-end, lakeside lifestyle community is Orillia's first and only gated development, planning officials said.

Evans said gates should not be allowed if they prevent residents from accessing the waterfront or public thoroughfares.

"We should not permit any more," he added.

Whether or not planning staff – and ultimately council – supports gated communities in future will depend on the nature of individual projects, said planning director Kathy Suggitt.

"Each (application) would have to be considered in its own light," Suggitt told *Orillia Today*.

Suggitt said the developer of Sophie's Landing received the necessary approvals before installing the keypad entry on a public road allowance.

The gate itself is located on private property, she added.

"The development, as proposed, certainly fills a

niche," she added. "There seems to be a market for it in Orillia."

Suggitt said Sophie's Landing satisfies a provincial policy that encourages infill development.

She said residents would be prevented from accessing the waterfront through a private property regardless of whether the development was gated.

Evans, however, is urging council to follow the lead of Bermuda and other destinations where the public is allowed unlimited access to the shoreline.

"As much of our waterfront as possible should be accessible to the public," he said.

Evans pointed to the example of one sunny state to the south as evidence of the pitfalls presented by gated communities.

He argued against the proliferation of these exclusive enclaves, saying they act as a social barrier between the haves and the have-nots.

"Florida is one huge gated community," he added.

"It is a way of keeping out the riff raff."

The developer of Sophie's Landing is proposing to build 36 linked townhomes and a recreation facility with a pool for the project's second phase.

City council will have an opportunity to approve a draft plan of subdivision at its June 25 meeting.