

Mud makes misery for north hill residents

BY JOCELYN MERCER

EDITOR

A group of more than 30 disgruntled ratepayers filled town council chambers last Monday to complain about soil erosion in the north hill subdivision.

Residents from Thistle Crescent have been bombarded with drifting clay from a new development in the area for the last three years, complained Galt Baalim, who made a presentation to council on the matter.

Baalim says the clay has killed grass, destroyed landscaped gardens and made enjoying backyards along the street impossible. In total, he estimates that it would take a minimum of \$156,000 to repair the landscaping damage alone.

In addition to the physical damage, Baalim claims that house prices have been severely impacted.

"Lord help you if you want to sell your house right now," he told councillors.

"This is not a new issue," explained Baalim, who says he's tried talking to the developer and town administration about the problem, but has been offered little support.

In 2006 Baalim says residents first started to feel the effects of Wilde Development's initial phase of its housing project in the north hill area. During the fall of that year the development company stripped the vegetation for its residential site. That year residents along Thistle Crescent received their first wave of a thick clay coating as soil drifted through fences and caked their backyards. The situation hasn't improved since then, says Baalim. Despite an offer of partial payment from the developer for clean-up in 2007, which was accepted by some residents, the problem persists. Late last year vegetation was stripped from another area of the site for the second phase of development.

While the developer has erected snowfences in attempt to minimize soil drift, the measure appears to be

futile.

Baalim says that he and 25 other householders in the area are now looking for the town to take some action on the matter. Baalim wants the municipality to enforce its development agreement with Wilde Development and start to put some weight behind its nuisance bylaws.

"The town is a victim itself," he added, referring to municipal green-space in the area which has also been bombarded with clay. In addition he said the outward appearance of the drifting soil did not bode well with visitors. "Jewel of the Rockies? I don't think so," he said.

Mayor Gary Mills said he had spoken to the developer about the issues and would be arranging a meeting to discuss the matter in the near future. "From what I've seen, they (Wilde Developments) want to solve this problem," said Mills.

Baalim will be returning to council on May 11 to find out what the municipality is willing to do to resolve the issue.

