

Housing Activists in Belarus See Progress in Meeting With Official

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A land use dispute between residents of the Uruchye-2 district just beyond the northeastern border of Minsk and local authorities reached a high point Friday when community organizer Valentina Malyutina met with Vladimir Makei, head of the Belarussian presidential administration.

Deputy chairman of the Minsk City Council Sergei Radoman also attended the meeting, Naviny.by reported, citing Denis Kobrusev, a member of the organizing committee of the pro-European Union organization European Perspective.

Makei had previously refused to meet with the activists.

Community activists have opposed construction of housing for OMON riot police and their families on the site of a playground and parkland since 2005, insisting that the plans violated zoning laws. They have staged numerous public meetings.

Officials insisted that the construction plans were in full conformity with the law.

A public meeting on March 17 attracted about 400 people, including head of the Pervomaisky district administration Igor Kudrevich, who confirmed that construction plans would go ahead.

When Uruchye-2 residents later saw construction equipment at the site, where preliminary preparations for building had been under way, about 30 people hung banners from their balconies, Malyutina told Naviny.by.

Police and utility workers removed a number of them and community organizers received summons to visit the local police station, where they were warned that their actions could be considered civil offenses.

Residents last week organized a demonstration attended by about 50 people.

A crew from Belarus-2 state television also came to the action, Malyutina told Onliner.by. The movement has already been the subject of extensive online coverage.

Signature gathering continued, so that the petition had more than 4,000 by the time Malyutina met with Makei.

Makei promised that the presidential administration's legal service would investigate the legality of the construction plans and report its conclusion within a week.

Attempts to reach Malyutina on Sunday and Monday were unsuccessful.

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