



# Conservation groups make offer for Walhalla mountain property

By David Williams  
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WALHALLA, SC — “That mountain has been there from eternity and God created it to be there for a long time to come. There is no need to be in a rush to sell.” — Frank Holleman III

A coalition of conservation organizations wants to make a proposal to Walhalla City Council to preserve and protect city-owned property on the mountain near Stumphouse Tunnel and Isaqueena Falls Park.

An unnamed developer who now lives in Florida has offered to buy the property and rebuild the city’s former water treatment plant that includes a reservoir, on 439 acres.

But Greenville attorney Frank Holleman III, who was born in Seneca and whose grandfather Frank Holleman was mayor of Walhalla, has sent a letter to council members on behalf of a conservation coalition.

“That mountain has been there from eternity and God created it to be there for a long time to come,” Mr. Holleman said. “There is no need to be in a rush to sell it this week or this month.”

The coalition includes Natureland Trust, the Upstate’s oldest land trust that has worked on projects such as the Jocassee Gorges and Caesar’s Head State Park; The Nature Conservancy, a worldwide organization that has a conservation easement on property just across S.C. 28 on Stumphouse Mountain and on the Greenville Watershed; Upstate Forever, which has been granted easements by landowners in Oconee and Pickens counties; and the Chattooga Conservancy.

Mr. Holleman said his group would like to meet with city officials soon and proposed next Monday night if possible.

“We’re not trying to put a dollar offer on the table,” Mr. Holleman said Tuesday. “That’s not what conservation organizations do.”

Mr. Holleman said the Blue Ridge Mountains are under siege and Walhalla has an opportunity to protect something for generations.

City officials and the Florida developer’s attorney have said there is no contract between the two, and plans for the watershed land have not been made public although various housing developments have been mentioned.

The City Council is scheduled to meet with the developer at 6 p.m. Thursday behind closed doors.

“Our position hasn’t changed,” Mayor Lamar Bailes said Tuesday. “Anybody that has an offer can put it in writing and send to us. The meeting Thursday is closed because it deals with a possible contractual deal.”

Mayor Bailes said the city is not actively looking to sell the property.

“If someone makes us an offer, we will consider it. It will have to be in writing,” Mayor Bailes said. “I do not intend to tie up the city talking about this every time we meet. The council may want to. I can’t say, but our job is to work for the city of Walhalla and the people of Walhalla.”

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