



Walhalla Council to hear proposal for controversial sale of Stumphouse Mountain property

By David Williams
Monday, March 5, 2007

WALHALLA, SC —

Walhalla Mayor Lamar Bailes and members of the Walhalla City Council will honor their pledges to listen to possible uses for the city's 439.6 acres of land on Stumphouse Mountain.

A third proposal has been presented to the city and the council plans a called 5:30 p.m. closed session Wednesday to discuss the undisclosed development.

"It's different," Mayor Bailes said Monday.

He did not give any details of the proposal.

Mayor Bailes said after the closed meeting Wednesday the council plans to meet in a work session. At the work session it could then discuss the latest proposal along with another proposal presented on Feb. 21 by conservation groups, he added.

In January, city officials learned of a private developer's interest in the city's property and adjacent land that is privately owned. But a company representing the developer withdrew its offer last month, citing misinformation given to the public along with controversy surrounding the developer.

Since the initial private offer, Mayor Bailes has stressed the city did not seek any proposals for its property near the Stumphouse Tunnel and Isaqueena Falls Park. The city maintains the park, but Clemson University owns the tunnel and the falls is on privately owned property. The city leases the land from both owners for the park.

Greenville attorney Frank Holleman, an Oconee County native who represents Naturaland Trust, one of a partnership of conservation groups that has made a proposal, said the groups' offer was a great opportunity for the city. He said the city could accept Naturaland Trust's offer of \$2.2 million for the land — about \$5,000 an acre — or it could reach an easement agreement and protect the land while maintaining ownership. He said the city could retain rights to timber management and to the water that would come from the city's former water treatment plant and the 15-acre reservoir that is on the land.

Tom Swaynham, regional wildlife coordinator with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and Dana Leavitt, land trust director with Upstate Forever, are also working with Mr. Holleman on conservation measures for the land.

The private developer said he was considering building as many as 200 homes on the property plus an inn for vacationers. Talks with the developer's representatives also centered on hiking and horse trails, and rebuilding the water plant to provide Walhalla with a new water source.

Mayor Bailes said he did not think council members would consider a private development at this time after the reaction from the last offer. And some council members appear to favor a conservation option for the land.

Council member Buddy Land said he is opposed to selling the land to a housing developer.

"It's the city's property and should be used to enhance the area," Mr. Land said Monday. "We have a very attractive offer and the conservation folks have been very flexible and should be able to present a plan which could include public use and benefit the city while preserving the land."

Top Jobs

[RN](#)
Agape Community Hospital

[Veterinary Technician](#)
Confidential Employer

[Real Estate Sales](#)
Lifestyle Homes

[School Teachers](#)
Confidential Employer

>> [See More Jobs](#) <<

