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Walhalla to review conservation deal offered for Stumphouse Mountain property

By [David Williams \(Contact\)](#)
Wednesday, March 7, 2007

What: Regular Walhalla City Council meeting

When: 5:30 p.m. March 13

Where: Walhalla City Hall, 206 N. Church St.

Contact: (864) 638-4343

WALHALLA, SC — A working agreement between Walhalla and conservation organizations that would include the city's 439.6 acres of Stumphouse Mountain property could be ready for Walhalla City Council members to review as early as Tuesday.

The council held a brief work session Wednesday with council members favoring some form of a conservation arrangement following a one-hour closed meeting during which council members heard from Matt Moore

and Tim Simpson. The two men proposed an Off Highway Vehicle park on the property with the city retaining ownership of the land and receiving revenue from the park's operation.

Without taking action, the council agreed to review Greenville attorney Frank Holleman's recommendation of a conservation easement through Upstate Forever while an application for funding would be filed through the Conservation Bank.

Council members are expected to review the first draft of the agreement and suggest any changes at the council's 5:30 p.m. Tuesday meeting.

Mayor Lamar Bailes offered the floor to any of the 15 people who attended the council's work session to speak in opposition to the plan and no one rose to speak.

Mr. Holleman and City Attorney Julian Stoudemire, who did not attend the work session, could incorporate several options for the city including Walhalla maintaining ownership of the land, timber management rights and rights to the city's former water treatment plant and 15-acre reservoir.

Council members also discussed the city expanding the size of the reservoir and adding a fishing pier while encompassing its present operations at the adjacent Stumphouse Tunnel and Isaqueena Falls Park.

"There are more than 60,000 visitors a year to the park," City Administrator Nancy Goehle said.

Mr. Moore and Mr. Simpson said their proposal was not limited to motorized off-road vehicles but could also include horse trails and bike trails.

Mayor Bailes said some sort of trail operations could be included, but the details and requirements of the conservation groups would need to be addressed.

"We have to consider what's good for Walhalla," Mayor Bailes said. "That's our job."

Council member Ron Mattox said he felt the city needs to act.

"We can not do nothing," Mr. Mattox said. "We have an opportunity and need to seize it. I think a conservation easement would be good and the city would have ownership. It would insure it for our children and our children's children."

Council member Randy Chastain also said he favored a conservation easement and that it was time for the city to look toward S.C. 11 and the eastern side of town for revenue.



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"I think it's time we addressed that," Mr. Chastain said.

Council member Hal Duke also favored a conservation easement, which has a March 31 application deadline and could mean between \$800,000 and \$2 million for the city.

The easement would not bring in as much money as was offered by Naturaland Trust, which put \$2.2 million on the table to buy the property.

Council member William Addis said he was proud of the city's work in creating the Stumphouse Tunnel and Isaqueena Falls Park. Council members Buddy Land and Thelma Miller said the city has been presented with a great opportunity.

The city currently leases the tunnel from Clemson University and the falls area from the family that owns the property. The city's property is adjacent and could be incorporated into a larger park operation.

"Every council member has the greatest concern to do the very best for the city of Walhalla," Ms. Miller said. "And we are not finished weighing our options."

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