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Talisman owners

Grey Highlands council
hears of plans to include
major hotel chain to
help refurbish resort

DON CROSBY

SUN TIMES CORRESPONDENT

The owners of Talisman Mountain Springs say an additional \$30 million is needed to bring the resort up to an international standard.

Brian Ellis and Philip Calvano recently told Grey Highlands council that following an analysis by an independent industry leader, they've concluded Talisman's success will be directly related to the

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POSTMEDIA

going big

scope of the resort from the day it first opens. And that means expanding some current services and creating new ones.

Ellis said plans are to include Talisman as part of a major hotel chain. "It gives you their booking system which is great; it also gives you access to their huge membership which is worldwide, about 70 million," Ellis said.

The review revealed that the current 92 rooms are not enough, from an effective business perspective, to satisfy the growing needs of the hotel. "It has been shown that optimal overnight accommodations required to sustain that overall business model is 150 suites," Ellis said.

The additional suites of vary-

ing sizes will be built on top of a building at the site. Design and engineering is to start early in the new year.

A new lobby will connect the main lodge (Building 1) and Building 2, which contains rooms and suites. The new lobby will contain two elevators to serve Building 2. "It's important that Talisman branding reflect the immense upgrade to the hotel and amenities, while taking advantage of a premier booking system that involves millions of reward points members," Ellis said.

Talisman will be under contract with a hotel chain. Together with the branding exercise, a management team for the new resort will steer Talisman through the star-

tup process.

"The management companies and the hotel brands and all of the professionals say we're going in the right direction, but it does take time," Calvano said.

A nordic spa is considered a vital component of the new plans and is projected to attract 40,000 visitors a year. The spa, which will be developed around the former day lodge (Building 3), will include a silent area, a whisper area and social area. It will offer a full kitchen, restaurant and views of the surrounding hills and parts of the Beaver Valley.

The new Talisman is being planned as a four-season destination.

Approximately 5.4 hectares (12

acres) of land near the spa will become a vineyard. There are also plans for a brewery.

Talisman's nine-hole golf course has been open for almost two years and Calvano said the feedback from local golfers has been that it's in better condition than ever.

A former ski destination, Talisman will continue to benefit from local skiers. The Beaver Valley Ski Club, next door to Talisman, has shown a strong interest in developing a relationship whereby its members would be shuttled to Talisman for overnight stays. This would help boost membership to the ski club and ensure steady patronage at Talisman during the winter months.

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Conferences, team-building activities and weddings are among some of the services to be offered.

Development of the resort is taking place in phases.

Phase 1 includes upgrading the suites, many with fireplaces and all with wifi.

The existing 200-seat restaurant will be renovated, and an outdoor dining area will be added.

The renovated gym in Building 1 will allow for light training and include new restroom and change areas for the gym and the pool.

Renovated conference facilities will include five meeting and banquet rooms.

The main ballroom has seen the biggest change, with an additional event bar and prep kitchen room.

Phase 2, which centres around the former day lodge, will be home to the nordic spa and will include a full kitchen, there will be approximately 18 massage rooms.

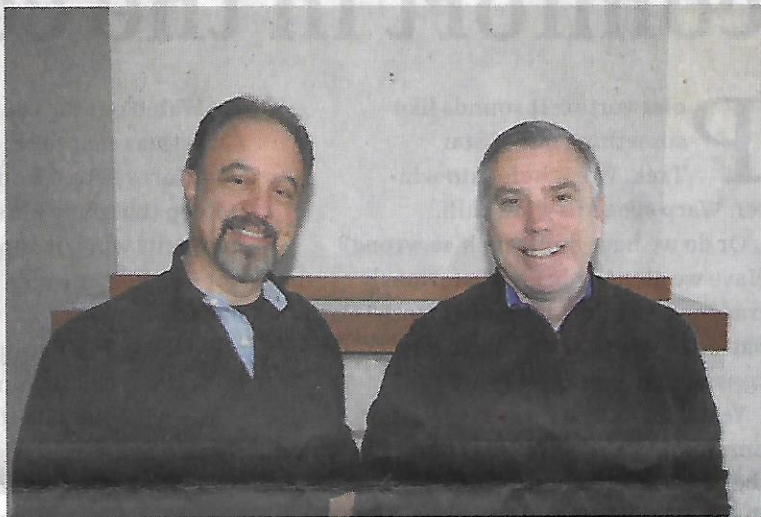
The main spa area will include a large heated four-foot-deep pool with seating around the edges and will have a large water fall spilling from a second hot pool above.

The main pool will have a large grotto built under a waterfall.

Another small pool with a rock overhang waterfall and standing area will allow guests to stand under a cold waterfall or plunge into cold water.

Beyond the pools in the main area a large sauna and adjoining steam room will be adjacent to a large sun-room. There will also be private hot tubs and small saunas. Additional plans include a salt cave and other outdoor tranquil areas.

Ellis said as the owners work to



SUN TIMES FILE PHOTO

Talisman Mountain Springs owners Philip Calvano, left, and Brian Ellis are seen in this file photo.

finalize financing for further development, planning for should take another 18 months.

Calvano said the partners are committed to putting the extra effort into a long-term commitment.

"It would have been easier to tear it down but then you would lose the heritage, history and the charm of what Talisman was all about. Our goal is keep that intact and to build on that," he said.

Ellis predicts the new resort will be a prestige product associated with a major hotel chain but with a degree of flexibility.

"The brand has allowed us to keep the name Talisman Mountain Springs Inn, and their name will be attached right underneath," Ellis said.

Both partners said it's been an incredible challenge with \$7 million of their own money invested to date.

"Whenever we see the vision it makes it that much easier to see it through. The vision is that the Beaver Valley will have one of the premier resorts in the province of Ontario," Calvano said.

Ellis noted that wellness tourism is the fastest growing form of tourism in the world. And Talisman expects to tap into that market.

"We expect to bring people in from China, Germany, other parts of Europe and the United States and the eight million people within two hours of Talisman," he said.

Ellis stressed that that a project of this size can only be accomplished with a great deal of planning and development and the full support of the municipality. He said the new resort will create 200 direct jobs.

"We look forward to working with the municipality throughout the process," Ellis said.

Thanks

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