

Still no bids for Talisman Resort

By Don Crosby, For The Sun Times
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The latest attempt to sell the main Talisman Resort property has drawn a blank.

Bids were to be opened at 3:15 p.m. during Monday's Grey Highlands council meeting but at 3:05 chief administrative officer Dan Best announced to councillors and onlookers who packed the council chamber that no bids had been submitted.

"To say that we're disappointed would be an understatement," said Best, who was left scratching his head about the lack of interest.

It's the third time the municipality has put the 260-acre property up for tax sale. In March of this year the result was the same — no bid for the main Talisman Resort property. Two other properties located on either side brought in more than — \$400,000 well above the \$92,800 owed in back taxes and penalties.

A tax sale process last year was stopped at the last minute when the owners promised to pay the outstanding taxes and arrears. They later failed to pay in time.

The amount owed the municipality on the Talisman Resort property is closing in on \$2.4 million.

Best said he was surprised no bids were received given the interest shown by potential investors and buyers in recent weeks. He said staff will reassess the situation and prepare a report to council containing possible options.

The municipality could take ownership of the property and sell it on the open real estate market or take ownership and work with investors to develop the property.

A third option is to do nothing and hope the current owners come up with a plan. Council turned down a proposal submitted by Bill Minnis, a spokesperson for the resort owners, earlier this year to delay the sale of Talisman. The plan called for time to prepare and submit a draft plan of subdivision within six months.

"There's a whole myriad of variations that we have to look at and make sure that council is privy to all of the options before moving forward," said Best.

Coun. Lynn Silverton said she is disappointed no offers were received and now the future of the property falls back onto council.

“Something needs to happen soon, not only for the property but for the people who live around it. The people who live on the roads around Talisman are certainly concerned (about the value of their properties) and rightly so,” she said.

Elizabeth Johnston, who bought the former 50-acre tubing hill parcel as a gift for her husband, was also disappointed there were no offers. She came to the council chambers hoping to meet her new neighbours.

“I hope the town tries to find an investor or at least someone who is looking for a country cottage. Either someone who has a few million dollars to buy a place which is no longer a commercial property or to other extent where locals who love the place have somewhere to go again.”

Johnston said she and her husband have three large former maintenance sheds that she was prepared to offer to a prospective new owner who might be interested in restarting the resort in some form.

She said although she hasn't seen it, a lot of her neighbours have told her about the vandalism taking place in the main building. She had a theft on her property during the last week, but a suspect was quickly identified.

“I have video cameras up and the person has been charged,” said Johnston.