

Talisman, Talk of the Township

Published on March 3rd, 2014 | by the Flesherton



Rumours continue to swirl about the Talisman Mountain Resort property even in the wake of the public consultations.

One of the more persistent rumours is told several different ways but basically avers that a serious offer from a sports centre developer was turned down by the municipality.

One source, who declined to be identified, tells it this way: He was at a dinner with a number of 'well-connected' people, one of whom he identified as a 'journalist.' According to the source, the journalist said that the municipality had received a serious offer from energy drink maker Red Bull, who wanted to develop the property for an extreme sports facility. The source says that Red Bull wanted the back taxes forgiven and that they would be putting millions of dollars into the site.

Dan Best, Grey Highland Municipality CAO denied this rumour in a telephone interview on February 28, 2014. He says no offer was ever made for an extreme sports facility.

He did say that it was not a secret that two serious offers were made and Council decided to "table" both of them, until the municipality's task force could review all the potential options.

One offer, which came late last fall was for all of the remaining property (two of three parcels had already been sold). The offer was from a group, Best says, "With no real plan but with the desire to work with the municipality on developing the property." Best says that Council basically put the offer "in abeyance," so that they could have an opportunity to review other options. "Potentially that offer is still good. They [the investors' group] keep in touch with the municipality," Best says.

And, just after that, another serious offer was made for the portion of the property on the top of the slope, which could be developed for housing, Best says. Again, Council declined and tabled the offer, thinking it better to keep the property remaining as a whole and to wait to see what other development opportunities might arise through the task force's work.

But, as the municipality looks to its task force and seeks assistance from the University of Guelph for ideas and options, one lifelong Grey County resident is puzzled that the development work that she undertook with Bill Minnis, is not being sought.

Rhonda Iadnardi, applied to the Task Force Committee in fall, 2013 and was not selected to participate. She later heard from friends that she was named an "advisor" to the Task Force Committee. No one from the Municipality or the task force spoke with her. According to the municipality, three advisors – Iadnardi, Jake Hammer and Kerry Baskey – selected to assist the task force would be consulted on an "as needed" basis.

"I guess I wasn't 'as needed' because nobody ever called me, except once someone from the municipal office called to get my email, which I gave her."

Iadnardi, one of only two women who were selected to be on either the Task Force or the Advisory Committee, says that phone call was the only contact she had from the municipality or its task force.

Iadnardi worked at Talisman Mountain Resort as an Art Director, but the title doesn't come close to describing how involved she was with the development planning and marketing work she undertook for Talisman Resort GP. Iadnardi put development visions into art work and even researched the developers' market.

"It's not like Bill [Minnis, lead of Talisman Resort GP] didn't try some of these ideas I've heard at the town hall meetings. And some of the rumours are true. We approached many, many developers, we even approached Cirque de Soleil to use the resort as a circus training camp!"

"I built a website to help sell Talisman as a development opportunity and the site is still live," she says. (www.theBeavervalley.ca) The short site shows Talisman's location in Ontario, a bit about the natural environment, points of interest, local towns and a map of the full Talisman property with notes on potential development and existing zonings.

Says Iardinardi, "I don't know if the website is any help to the task force but it seems to me that at least being aware of the research and ideas that were tried before, and pretty recently, might help the municipality to not re-invent the wheel."