

THE SUN TIMES

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■ GREY HIGHLANDS: No bids in March

Municipality to try again to sell Talisman resort

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Sun Times correspondent

Grey Highlands will once again attempt to dispose of Talisman Resort through a tax sale.

Dan Best, the municipality's chief administrative officer, stressed in a report to council that a tax sale provides the safest way to recover the substantial arrears, charges and penalties with the least risk to the municipality or the tax base.

"This is the most risk averse option in terms of moving forward. We've always said our first and foremost responsibility has been to recover the \$2.3 million in arrears," Best said during an interview Monday.

Under provincial law the municipality can carry out a second tax sale of the property within two years of the first public sale. A tax sale was held in March but no one bid on the main Talisman Resort property. Two other properties with development potential were sold for well beyond the reserve prices.

Bill Minnis, who represents the owners of Talisman Resort, later blamed bad publicity surrounding the condition of the resort for preventing bidders from coming forward.

Grey Highlands will begin the process of serving notice to all

interested parties for the next 30 days and advertising the tax sale for four weeks. Bids will be opened on Aug. 12, the first council meeting of the month.

Best said council was following up on its decision to turn down a proposal the owners of Talisman made earlier this month to delay any tax sale for two years while they come up with a plan to develop the property. Council bluntly told Minnis that if the owners wanted to retain the property, all they have to do is pay the arrears and they can do whatever they want.

"The message from council at that time was clear, if the current owner is prepared to pay the \$2.3 million that is outstanding in arrears then council and municipality would be willing to work with the current owners moving forward," Best said. "Council is not prepared at this time to coordinate any deal with the current owner . . . in other words show us the money."

The option to take ownership of the property, known as vesting, is still available to the municipality, but is seen as a last resort.

"I think we have to look at the vesting once we've basically exhausted all the other options. But that comes with some certain risk . . . and at this time we don't feel it's appropriate that we put those arrears at risk," Best said.

Shelley

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