

Representatives from Grey Highlands met privately with members from a coalition that still wants to buy the municipally-owned lands adjacent to the former Talisman last week.

Bob Barnett, the Executive Director of the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy confirmed to the Advance that the group has put in an offer.

"We put in an offer for \$2,775,000 for the town-owned upper and lower parcels based on an appraisal," he wrote in an e-mail reply.

"I introduced EBC's work: 192 reserves, 70 sq km and 66 important species. Then I mentioned our work with other municipalities to build parks and developers."

The group made an earlier presentation to council, along with Friends of the Beaver Valley.

Grey Highlands announced the conditional sale of the properties to Westway Capital, at the end of July.

Since then, no regular council meetings have been held. And in the interim, the Friends of the Beaver Valley and the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy continued to work toward putting in its own offer on the property.

Others have jumped in as well, with a new website created called protecttalisman.ca launched, encouraging the public to contact council to express their desire to preserve the land for the public.

A petition on Change.org, begun by Charles Glasspool, had about 550 signatures on August 23.

The website says that the two parcels adjoining Talisman now owned by council should be preserved for public use. Its "Call to Action" is to stop the sale while developing a vision and site plan for the Talisman lands with public input and balancing economic and environmental needs.

Criticisms levelled include the long hiatus from the council table since the

sale was announced, and that the decision was made before a formal offer was made by the coalition, which had asked for time to prepare.

The municipality has said that because the offer from Westway is conditional, it is considered a "negotiation" and therefore details can stay in closed session.

The new "Protect Talisman" website also expresses dissatisfaction with the vagueness of Westway's plans that have been seen by the public.

The website, which says it was created by "Citizens for a Better Talisman Plan," also promotes lawn signs that are available locally.

"Protect Talisman is a volunteer group of concerned Grey Highlands' citizens working to mobilize our neighbours to demand a transparent, respectful and measured approach towards the management of the Talisman lands," the website states.

At a recent museum and heritage advisory committee, the question of the lands arose. Chair Nancy Matthews said that the municipality does recognize the corridor as significant heritage.

The question asked by member Elizabeth Norrington was referred by Ms Matthews to Community and Economic Development Director Michele Harris.

Ms Harris agreed with Deputy Mayor Aakash Desai that most of the information is still closed during the due diligence period of Westway Capital.

Ms Harris said there are three members of council who are meeting regularly with Westway, seeing that the company is made "well aware of the community interest."

Ms Harris added that most of the lands are under the authority of the NEC, and anything flowing from this offer or anything else will have to meet the NEC standard.

When the condition is removed, details will come out of closed session, Ms Harris said.

New offer submitted on Beaver Valley lands by coalition

Wed 8/25/21

The Flesher-ton
Advance

Thanks

Peay