

Agenda Item: 12b



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Charlie E. Ellis, Jr., Team Leader, Gateway Property Task Force

DATE: August 8, 2013

RE: Recommendations for Town Property at 104/106 Boys Camp Road

At your last meeting on July 9, Town Council approved Resolution No. 13-07-09 authorizing the Town to purchase a parcel of real estate generally located at the corner of Memorial Highway and Boys Camp Road. On the date of closing, July 16, Commissioner John Moore and Community Development Director Shannon Baldwin requested that I lead a small task force to professionally evaluate the property and provide recommendations to Town Council on the possible uses of the land and existing improvements. With input from Mr. Baldwin and Town Manager Chris Braund, we invited the following individuals who each agreed to participate in the task force:

- Ric Thurlby, architect
- Vic Knight, landscape architect
- Jonathan Hinkle, general contractor

In preparation for our task force meeting on August 2, I met at length with Mr. Baldwin on July 19 to review all of the due diligence materials which he and Town staff had assembled prior to closing. The information which we reviewed and discussed included:

- Existing property surveys
- Photographs of the existing buildings & improvements
- NCDOT right of way maps
- Lake Lure Flowering Bridge master plan

We thoroughly inspected each of the buildings and walked the property boundaries to better understand the physical relationship to each of the adjacent properties. As a follow up, Mr. Baldwin prepared a detailed context map which illustrates these relationships and helped to set the stage for our scheduled group discussion on August 2. In addition to a review of the stated objectives contained in Resolution No. 13-07-09, I corresponded with each member of Town Council to solicit any additional feedback. During our July 19 meeting we identified a number

of stakeholder groups we could later contact to solicit input and guidance. Mr. Baldwin created a list of these stakeholders for us to consider along with detailed notes of our discussion.

On August 2, the task force met at Town Hall with Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Braund as planned. After an overview of the property and various facts related to the acquisition, we had an enthusiastic discussion of what purposes the property might be utilized for. After reviewing the objectives stated in the council resolution, our conversation focused on what uses were physically possible, legally permissible and financially feasible. The group then walked over to the property for an inspection of the improvements, aided by the new property survey which had been completed earlier in the day.

After a thorough review of the condition of each building, the consensus of the task force is that there is little if any remaining value in those structures. Despite some initial enthusiasm that a portion of the buildings might be renovated for continued use, our conclusion is that the costs of renovation would exceed any value which might be realized. We therefore recommend that Town Council immediately authorize the total demolition of all existing buildings at a cost which would not exceed \$20,000, with the possibility that the open-air pavilion might be salvaged if it is determined during the demolition process to be structurally sound.

Upon completion of demolition, the task force would re-evaluate the vacant site regarding its potential for a number of uses and conduct interviews with the stakeholder groups. At the conclusion of the interviews, the task force will summarize all input and make new recommendations to Council regarding potential uses based on stakeholder input in preparation for Council's September 10th meeting. We expect that one of the recommendations the task force will make to Council in September is that the Town secure professional design services for creating site plans, drawings, and blueprints, if these are needed.

Beyond these recommendations, the task force also quickly reached consensus on the strategic value of this highly visible site. Whether the Town chooses to retain this property or later sell it to a private party, the opportunity to control the future use, desired image and functional access of this gateway parcel is of critical importance to our community. We welcome your comments and look forward to continuing with our work.