Ocean Breeze Park rift imperils deal

The residents haven’t elected officers or formed committees for their homeowners association.

Jim Morgan, the real estate agent for the park’s three owners. The descendants of park founders Harry and Queena Hoke informally offered to sell the 91-acre park to the residents for $40 million on March 12. But Morgan said that the owners are not going to wait much longer for residents to decide whether they are interested, because the owners could sell it easily to developers.

If the residents of the 55-and-older community are serious, they need to organize an exploratory committee in the next two weeks, Morgan said. The mobile home park comprises all of the residential area of the town of Ocean Breeze.

“Once they form a committee, we would like to meet and give them an official offer,” Morgan said, adding that residents then would have 45 days to decide whether they want to buy.

Residents have met several times since first being told about the prospective sale but have shown little organization. On March 17, after a meeting that involved several residents such as Frank Unterberger, Morgan said the owners will not wait two or three years for a bond issue and risk it failing.

The county would have to commit to buy it quickly, too, Morgan said.

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Residents such as Marie Roudebush have argued that the residents should not consider buying 45 vacant acres to the west of the mobile homes because part of it used to be the town’s dump and is contaminated.

“Just because they couldn’t get rid of it, they want us poor suckers to be stuck with that piece of land,” Roudebush said.

Morgan said less than 2 acres of the 45 acres were used for an unlined dump for the town’s household waste and that the owners would clean it up by removing any contaminated soil. He suggested that the residents could sell the 45 acres to a developer to recoup some of the $40 million purchase price.

The owners want to sell the entire park at once but they are willing to sell part of it to the residents and part to Martin County, Morgan said.

County Commissioner Lee Weberman has said that, if residents cannot buy the park, the county should buy it and build affordable housing.

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Residents such as Frank Unterberger have also argued that the residents shouldn’t pay the $40 million asking price. The land is not worth more than $15 million, he said.

Morgan said the owners will consider any offer the residents make, but he doesn’t expect them to go much lower.

“We’re very firm on that price,” Morgan said.

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