

What is the future of Talisman?

Meaford Express

The public received its first glimpse of the possible future of Talisman Mountain Resort at a pair of public meetings hosted by the Municipality of Grey Highlands last week.

The special Grey Highlands Task Force studying the future of the former ski resort held a pair of public meetings last week in Flesherton and Kimberley to give residents a chance to comment and ask questions about the work the group has been doing on the Talisman file.

Talisman, located in Kimberley, was once a thriving ski and hotel resort, with numerous recreational facilities. In recent years it has fallen into bankruptcy and severe disrepair. Grey Highlands recently took over ownership of the property through the tax sale process. A special public Task Force was appointed to study the possibilities for the report property.



Former Artemesia Township Mayor and current Grey Highlands Library Board Chair Jim Harrold facilitated the two meetings and explained much of the history of Talisman and what has happened to put Grey Highlands in the current position of owning the property. Graduate students from the University of Guelph are assisting the Task Force with the project and are compiling a literature review of other similar situations. The Task Force plans to present its findings to Grey Highlands council on April 16.

Harrold outlined the two objectives the Task Force has adopted for the project: 1. Whatever happens at Talisman should bring economic benefits to the area and the municipality. 2. Whatever happens should contribute to quality of life for all citizens in the municipality.

Harrold explained that there are some limitations on the property. He said the flood plain where the old golf course is located is not open for development and the slope where the ski hills are located can't be developed. There is land at Talisman that is open for development around where the current buildings are located and on top of the slope.

"There are some serious constraints on the property," he said.

Harrold said the Task Force has narrowed its focus to four possible scenarios for the property.

1: A focus on conservation and public stewardship. This would see the property remain in public hands with a focus on community based recreation activities.

2: A focus on training and education. This would see a potential owner/operator on site with a training/education facility or event a branch of a college campus.

3: Regional recreation hub. This would see the property developed with a possible owner/operator into a four-season destination with multiple recreation activities, possible accommodation and possible housing.

4: A Resort. This option would see Talisman re-developed into what it was before: a full-time private resort with dining, accommodation, recreation activities that would be marketed to customers on a national basis.

"The question is: what do you think of those?" Harrold said after the options were presented.

There were plenty of questions and comments from residents at both meetings. Much of focus from the public was on sustainability and preserving at least a portion of the property for public/recreational use. Numerous residents also wanted to see economic activity on the property to create local jobs and opportunities.

Task Force Chair Grant McGlaughlin said at the conclusion of the meetings that community input on this project is very important.

"This is a great opportunity for the community. Municipal ownership means it's in our control. It's a very unique property - let's try and do something special with it," he said.