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Council urged to buy golf land Alderman seeks Shaw-Nee Slopes deal

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The city should look at purchasing a private golf course whose proposed sale to developers has angered residents, Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart says.

She will ask her council colleagues on Dec. 15 to have city staff investigate the possibility of buying the Shaw-Nee Slopes golf course to use as a city facility, as well as ways to fund that, including using municipal, provincial and private dollars.

"At the end of the day, I want to make sure we have explored every single option to save the Shaw-Nee golf course," Colley-Urquhart said, adding the city hasn't brought a new public course on line since 1981.

She said some sort of joint-venture might be possible.

"I want us to be creative and innovative in finding the resources to do it."

However, Geo-Energy Enterprises has made a conditional offer to purchase the land, with plans to develop the site.

Will Hoes, the developer, said the agreement in principle closes next summer.

"We're working on a development concept," he said, adding they will be meeting with Colley-Urquhart this week to bring her up to date. "I very much hope she likes it."

He added the plans would leave the golf course as green space, with development around its edges. The plans will be ready to show the community in mid-January.

"I fully understand the fears out there, because nobody knows what the plans are," Hoes said.

Any proposals to develop the Shaw-Nee site have been met with opposition from neighbours who want it to stay as is.

Vic Bohonos, a spokesman for the Shawnee-Evergreen community association, said any development is "a slippery slope."

It would require a land-use change and the approval of city council.

Colley-Urquhart said a compromise with some development may be possible.

"The community is unequivocally opposed to this golf course being taken out, and so am I," she said. "Maybe there's a compromise here. There's 143 acres (57.9 hectares) there, all of which does not have to be used for an 18-hole golf course.

"Who knows if (Geo-Energy's) offer will even stand at the end of the day. And if not them, maybe there's another developer out there interested in a joint-venture of this nature."

Ald. Gord Lowe said city involvement, especially when a private company is interested, would be a hard sell for him.

"On the surface, I can't see one reason why the city would invest," he said. "I see this as the city step-ping in to what is essentially a private development option."

He added that if the city intervened every time residents didn't like a development, "we'd be buying land every month."

Colley-Urquhart's motion asks for a report back next April.

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