



Roland Park offered to buy country club land

Citizens proposed \$4 million, Keswick contract is for \$12 million plus

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In the past decade, the Roland Park Civic League has offered to buy land from the Baltimore Country Club, three times.

Now that the country club is under contract to sell 17 acres to Keswick-Multi Care Center to be developed into a retirement community, those offers are salt on the wounds of Roland Park residents who oppose the development.

During a public meeting July 1 at St. David's Church about the unpopular land sale, David Tufaro, a developer and former chairman of the Roland Park Foundation, revealed that the charitable organization, created by the neighborhood, received no response from the country club to its offers.

According to the organization's records, in 1999, the foundation offered \$4.25 million for 18 acres of country club land at a site east of Falls Road bordered by Harvest Road to the north and Hillside Road to the south.

Current state property tax records value the land at \$1.9 million. The foundation proposed purchasing 18 acres to maintain the green space and tennis courts or to possibly relocate the Roland Park Pool facilities.

In 2001, the foundation made a second proposal, this time for 18.5 acres, and offered \$4.2 million with plans to retain the green space and existing tennis courts.

In 2003, the foundation made yet another bid for the property, offering \$4.2 million dollars to maintain the land as green space and include athletic fields. However, this offer was in partnership with Friends School and Roland Park Country School.

That deal for the property fell through when Roland Park Country School and Friends made a separate offer for the property.

On June 12, the country club and Keswick announced they had signed a contract worth more than \$12.5 million for a 17-acre parcel of the site previously sought by the foundation.

The price of the sale is contingent on the rezoning of the property to allow denser development. Any change in zoning would have to be approved by the Baltimore City Council.

Tim Chriss, a member of the country club, said the club could not consider selling the land at the time the foundation's offers were made because it was not until 18 months ago they received permits from Baltimore County to build more tennis courts at its Five Farms site in Lutherville.

He also contends that in March he and other club members met with Ken Rice, the current Roland Park Foundation chairman, and Mike DiPietro, who was then president of the Roland Park Civic League.

At that meeting, Chriss said, DiPietro and Rice were given one last chance to put an offer together for the property and they did not.

However, after Tuesday's meeting at St. David's, DiPietro disputed Chriss' account of the March meeting.

DiPietro said at that meeting it was made clear the country club had an interested buyer that had secured first right of refusal on the property.

The revelations of past attempts by the neighborhood to purchase the property helped earn support from elected officials in attendance, including Del. Samuel "Sandy" Rosenberg, who called the property "valuable sacred land" worth fighting for, and Sen. Lisa Gladden.

Rosenberg and Gladden represent the state's 41st District, which includes Roland Park.

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