

## **PRESS RELEASE – 1.179 ACRES (W. Goodrich & Church Street)**

In October of 2017, the City of Thomaston was contacted by a developer who expressed interest in purchasing the property located at W. Goodrich & Church Street. This property consists of 1.179 acres and includes a section of Park Drive, as well as a triangular piece of land that was deeded to the City of Thomaston by B.F. Goodrich.

Georgia law regulates the procedure by which a municipality may sell property. The Mayor and Council chose to advertise the property and receive sealed bids in accordance with the statute and also as permitted by the City Charter, a legislative act. Prior to advertising, the property was surveyed and appraised. The procurement and solicitation ran in the legal organ the week of November 6<sup>th</sup>. In addition, notification was displayed on the City's website and Facebook page.

Bids were received on December 8<sup>th</sup>, and the City had one respondent. The bid price for the 1.179 acres was \$500,000.

In the bid package, the City required the following stipulations in efforts to protect the Corridor and the Silvertown community:

- If, after the expiration of two (2) years from the date of conveyance of title out of the City of Thomaston, the Purchaser has not completed construction on the primary building, structures, or facilities, parking areas, loading areas or landscaping. The City shall have the option to refund 75% the purchase price and enter into possession of said property. The City reserves the right to extend this time limit or waive or alter the above stated conditions for good cause.
- No “discount stores” shall be constructed on subject property.
- If subject property is bundled with any adjoining parcels for a multi-parcel development, then the following shall also apply:
  - The Development, if applicable, shall have a double setback with landscape buffer along the back alley of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, SW.
  - The Development, if applicable, shall not place any trash receptacles along the back alley of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, SW.
  - The Development shall not use the back alley of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, SW for commercial access to subject property, or contiguous properties tied to said development.
  - The Development shall use Hwy 19 for ingress/egress for commercial trucks.

- Where feasible the Development will be all electric and shall be served by the City of Thomaston Electrical Department.
- The Development shall be responsible for paying for the relocation of any City utilities which interfere with Developer's site plans.
- The City of Thomaston reserves the right to approve the material used in connection with exterior façades of any building facing a public street or roadway if such facades differ from those proposed in bid.
- The Development shall adhere to the provisions of Sections 71-31 through 71-50 of the City of Thomaston Code of Ordinances as currently enacted, unless a variance is specifically approved by the Mayor and City Council.
- The development shall meet all City of Thomaston Building Codes, unless a variance is specifically approved by the Mayor and City Council.

The bid that the City received was not specifically responsive to the terms and conditions that were required in the bid document. Therefore, the Mayor and Council authorized the City Manager and the City Attorney to negotiate with the sole bidder and to report back to the full body with specifics regarding these stipulations and protections. The City has been in contact with the developer but has not finished negotiations and does not have the full specifics of the proposed development.

**Regarding rumors and myths:**

- The City does not know what business or businesses are interested in locating within this project.
- No one has suggested or offered that the island will become a parking lot.
- The City has not violated any laws or taken any vote in private concerning this property.
- The City's Mayor does not make unilateral decisions that affect our community. He is the City's chief advocate of policy, but all matters pertaining to real estate go before the entire City Council.

- The City is not in a desperate position to come up with cash. The City's reconciled unrestricted cash position at the end of December 2017 was \$6,934,057. Do not confuse this total with amounts that have been touted by others which include restricted accounts. The City is still in receipt of these same restricted accounts which include deregulation funding, SPLOST, intergovernmental funding, escrowed funding held in generation trust accounts and flexible spending accounts at MEAG, etc... Any citizen interested in the financial condition of the City is encouraged to contact the City Manager's Office.
- Neither the Mayor nor any Council member has taken the position that property tax increases will be necessary because mill village values are declining. The City's net tax digest has declined and that is fact. Despite this fact, millage rates have remained constant.
  - One could argue that declining property values within the mill village are directly related to the closing of the mills, which in turn resulted in thousands of lost jobs. This effect ultimately led to higher densities of rental properties. Ergo, the City Council is interested in educated exploration of any and all opportunities related to economic activity.
- The City's decision to raise water and sewer rates in 2017 and to restructure electric rates was not done in an effort to shift the burden to small business and residential customers. The decision was made after conducting a cost-of-service study by an outside agency, a study that was promised by this administration. The City has many water and sewer issues that need addressing. The City Council eliminated the summer electric rates and instituted a blended rate to soothe cyclical swings for people on budgets.
- The piece of property being considered for sale is not part of the Greatest Generation Park, and is not part of the Park's master plan.
- Note that one or more of the trees on this lot are diseased and removal has been recommended by an arborist. This action has been delayed in anticipation of the potential selling of the property. Whether it is sold or not, the diseased trees will have to be removed.
- The City Council is aware of a petition that is circulating concerning the potential sale of this property. There is however concern that signatures are being sought without the provision of complete and accurate information.

Why sell this property, if the City does not need the money?

(1) The price is advantageous and a consideration.

(2) Citizens have expressed to the Mayor and Council a need for more jobs in the community, an issue since the mills were closed and abandoned. Note, the photographs in the newspaper ad of dilapidated property are not properties owned by the City.

(3) Citizens have expressed to the Mayor and Council a desire for new dining and shopping options.

(4) Development in the City is a mark that our City is growing and will inspire interest by other employers and citizens in moving to the City.

(5) Adding new businesses will add taxpayers and also generate revenue through electric and water service.

At the time this Mayor and Council were elected, many citizens vociferously objected to the development of a park at the City Reservoir. This administration took note and the park was not developed. The Mayor and Council interpreted citizen concerns to be that a park was an unneeded luxury and that economic development was a priority.

The City Council has made no decision to date regarding the sale of the referenced property. This administration is greatly concerned and interested in promoting economic development and quality of life for all of our citizens. That means that outside-the-box thinking is prudent, and that any endeavor that might bring jobs and positive activity should be investigated and vetted. This administration is not interested in killing development prior to having all of the facts. Once all of the facts have been gathered, representatives from this administration will be more than happy to conduct town hall meetings to address any concerns that citizens might have. We do not have all of the details yet, but we are working on it.

We want to thank all parties who have come out, both in protest and in support of this process. We are here to represent you, the Citizens of Thomaston, and the Mayor and Council will strive to make the best decision for our community after receiving all of the information needed to act.