

Committee Negotiates Option To Purchase Lindsey Property

By PRESTON KNIGHT

HARRISONBURG — A committee pitching an urban park in downtown Harrisonburg announced Friday a privately negotiated option to purchase Lindsey Funeral Home on South Main Street, which could create a larger layout for the proposed attraction.

The option was negotiated by “a group of various citizens interested in the park,” said Matt Robertson, spokesman for a design team selected by the Plan Our Park committee. The group’s members and terms of the option will remain private until a final agreement is made, if it is at all.

The city is not involved in the option, officials say. An option gives the buyer a certain amount of time to make a purchase, usually at a set price.

According to online real estate records, the city assesses the property at 473 S. Main St., which is Lindsey Funeral Home’s address, at a value of \$918,000. L.C. Bernard is listed as the owner.

The design team of eight local and national firms is now studying whether the funeral home could be incorporated into park plans before the land transfers ownership. Its work is also privately funded.

City Council will have final say on the park, and the public will have numerous chances, beginning later this month, to weigh in. Revitalization group Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance also is involved in the project.

The funeral home would likely relocate if it sells its property for use as a park, said Robertson, the president and founder of the Stratford Cos. Inc., a custom home design and renovation firm in Harrisonburg.

“The larger the footprint of a future park, the larger the opportunities the future footprint could create,” he said. “The whole idea is to think bigger and get input from the whole community.”

Ellen Brodersen, a representative for Lindsey Funeral Home from city law firm Clark & Bradshaw, said the process is in the “early stages” and has “a lot of moving parts,” but she confirmed that the business has negotiated an option to sell its property.

The design team is studying the impact of a city park in an area bounded by Bruce, Liberty and Main streets and the World War I memorial on South Main Street.

The park itself has no defined boundary. But if the funeral home were eventually purchased, about 4.5 acres around Turner Pavilion on South Liberty Street, which is on city-owned property slightly north of the business, could be transformed into an

attraction.

A larger farmers market that uses the pavilion would be part of the plan, officials say.

Meetings Scheduled

The design team will host a pair of public meetings on the proposed park on July 31 in City Council chambers at 409 S. Main St. The meetings are from 3 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. The team seeks input on what amenities residents want in a park.

At 9:30 a.m. Aug. 3, the team will present its initial findings based on the public meetings and describe the next steps in the process.

A detailed plan for the park, including cost estimates, will come to City Council in the fall.

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