
Proposed land purchase by town could also benefit military

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Emerald Isle land purchase would also help prevent encroachment on military training in the area

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EMERALD ISLE | The Town of Emerald Isle is moving forward with efforts to purchase the last remaining large vacant tract of land within town and land key to preserving a buffer between community uses and military training in the area.

The Board of Commissioners approved four actions at its April meeting needed to proceed with securing the \$3 million needed to acquire the approximately 30-acre tract located adjacent to the Town Government Complex.

With the land's location directly in the flight path for Marine Corps Auxiliary Landing Field Bogue, known as Bogue Field, a request for funding through the military is a key part of the proposed funding package.

“The acquisition of the Surfside Realty tract by the town would prevent future residential development and thereby prevent additional encroachment that could limit or restrict military training, testing, and operations conducted at Bogue Field,” Emerald Isle Town Manager said in materials presented to the board.

“The town has maintained a cooperative relationship with MCAS Cherry Point, which utilizes Bogue Field, over the past 15 years, and MCAS Cherry Point has often noted its desire to prevent development of the Surfside Realty tract.”

Rush said federal funding for up to 50 percent of the land acquisition cost is available through the military's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program and the town has been working with officials at Cherry Point in securing funding.

The use of REPI would limit the town's use of the property to recreational purposes and Cherry Point would require an easement on the property with restrictions on development of the property.

Under the proposed funding package, the town is seeking \$1.5 million from the REPI program. The town board also approved resolutions requesting \$500,000 from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, \$545,000 from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund and has agreed to a town contribution of \$455,000.

The town has executed a purchase contract contingent upon securing the funding. There is a due diligence period that extends to Oct. 2 and the town expects to hear funding decisions by that time.

For the town, the property is strategically located next to its existing recreation center and facilities and includes land along Archers Creek.

A preliminary subdivision plat for the land, known as the Surfside Realty property, was approved by the town more than 25 years ago for the 57-lot single-family residential subdivision was never constructed. Current zoning is residential multi-use and should the tract ever be developed, it could accommodate up to 8 condominium units per acre.

With the purchase, the town would help prevent further encroachment on area military training needs while also preserving the land for its future recreational uses.

Rush said there are no immediate plans for the use of the land but one of the needs the town has long wanted to see address is a place for athletic fields.

Rush said the land is large enough to accommodate fields as well as other potential uses. And is likely the last available land in town to expand its recreational offerings.

“If the town completes the acquisition of the Surfside Realty tract, I envision the property ultimately being developed with some combination of a baseball field, soccer field, tennis courts, dog park, and/or any other active recreational facilities desired by the community. In essence, if the town is ever going to have such a facility, this is likely the only place it would or could be located,” Rush noted

While there are a number of potential uses, Rush also noted that about 20 acres would be preserved as a nature park with hiking trails and other passive recreational uses.

