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# School bids for Key Laguna site

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SEBASTOPOL — A key piece of land in the Laguna Park Master Plan may be out of the city's reach.

Owners of the 31-acre Saddleburr property have accepted an offer to purchase the land by the Sebastopol Independent Charter School, which has been looking for a permanent school site for a number of years.

Greg Haynes, director of the 100-student school, said an offer has been accepted on the property, which is adjacent to the Sebastopol city limits on the south side of Palm Drive. He said the school will spend 60-90

days "to study the feasibility of using the parcel" for a permanent school. The school, which is now in its third year, has grades K-2, but plans to grow to a K-8 enrollment over the next six years.

The property, once considered for residential development, is contiguous with the Palm Terrace property, the 17-acre parcel of Laguna uplands that was recently donated by the Chilotti family to the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation.

The city of Sebastopol and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District have been actively trying to purchase easements for (Please see Laguna page A11)

## Laguna . . .

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the Saddleburr property, which is considered a key parcel in Laguna Park and preservation plans.

City Manager Paul Berlant said the city made an offer last month, which "has not been officially rejected." He declined to say how much the city bid.

Haynes acknowledged that "there are huge environmental considerations" for the Laguna

land. "We'd have to look at it from every different perspective and see whether it makes sense in terms of our overall uses . . . at this point we are looking to meet the school's needs."

The Sebastopol Independent Charter School operates as an independent public school, under the sponsorship of the Sebastopol Union School District. The school has requested that the district allow the charter school's own council to be the lead agency for the review of an environmental impact report.

It is assumed that an EIR for the school project would be required, said Haynes. "I think we would automatically do one," he said. "We would want to find out what the impacts are and what could be done there."

Haynes said the property purchase would have to be funded by "a massive fundraising effort."

"I have no idea whether we would even be able to come up with it," said Haynes.

He added that the school has been searching for property "for the past couple years . . . and

this may be just another effort that doesn't work out."

The school is now housed in the former First Interstate Bank building, across the street from city hall.

About half of the 31-acre parcel is within the 100-year floodplain. The city and Open Space District sought a "forever wild" easement for the lower portion of the property, which would allow no development. The upper half of the property was considered for an open space easement, which could allow agricultural activity, and the

existing residence on the property.

David Hansen, director of the county Open Space District, said if the property is sold, "it would be disappointing of course, because we felt it was a good project. It would fit in nicely with the other properties . . . and fits in with the city's Laguna Park Master Plan."

Hansen added that "we would be interested in working with the new owner" to pursue open space easements.

Bill Haigwood, president of the Laguna de Santa Rosa

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Foundation, said "We're greatly disappointed that the Open Space District's offer was turned down . . . we consider the Saddleburr Property to be an essential part of the restoration and preservation of the Laguna for future generations."

Haynes said that if the property is purchased by the charter school, "we'd love to talk to the city and any other agencies about ways to work together to achieve any aims we agree on . . . if we move forward we will be looking at environmentally sensitive ways to proceed."