# Bidding frenzy

## Oconee delinquent tax sale pulls in more than $1.2M



CARLOS GALARZA | THE JOURNAL

**Auctioneer David Meares, seated at table, points to a winning bid Monday during the Oconee County Delinquent Tax Sale at the County Council Chambers in Walhalla. Unofficially, the sale topped $1.2 million.**

**BY CARLOS GALARZA**
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Money flew to the tune of more than $1.2 million in less than four hours at the Oconee County Delinquent Tax Sale on Monday.

A total of 489 properties that owed taxes to Oconee County were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

An overflow crowd jammed into the Oconee County Council Chambers, including scores of registered bidders looking to pick up valuable real estate at bargain prices.

They weren't disappointed.

One bidder picked up Lot 80 at The Cliffs at Keowee Falls South for $26,000. The minimum bid on the property was $5,837.25.

At the height of the real estate buying frenzy five years ago, lots at the prestigious Cliffs Communities were selling for $500,000 and up.

Another lot at The Cliffs owned by CTC Development LLC sold for $92,000 — the largest purchase of the day.

Delinquent Tax Collector Kevin Robinson said back taxes owed on dozens of properties owned by Keowee Falls Investment Group LLC and Keowee Investment Group LLC, both subsidiaries of The Cliffs Communities Inc., were paid last week and taken off the tax sale rolls.

The Cliffs, founded by Jim Anthony, has been hit hard by the housing market crash of 2008 and the slow economic recovery from the Great Recession.

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The Associated Press reported over the weekend that The Cliffs owes millions of dollars to a Travelers Rest bank and a Florida corporation that have filed foreclosure complaints against the upscale developer.

David Meares of the Meares Auction Group based in Pelzer kept bidders on their toes with his lightning quick calls.

During one stretch when Meares could not get anyone to bid, he told the crowd: "Time to get a snack." When there was movement by some toward the door he snapped: "I didn't mean it."

Meares said he also had company representatives at delinquent tax sales in Pickens and Beaufort counties.

"I can't remember having three tax sales in one day," Meares said.

Initially, the Delinquent Tax Collector advertised a listing of 1,192 properties that owed $995,825 in taxes.

Robinson said he would have an official tally of the tax sale later in the week.

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## BIDDING: The Cliffs owes millions