City still focused on Hartwell Inn

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Clemson City Council has unanimously agreed to table a resolution ordering demolition of the vacant Lake Hartwell Inn on U.S. Highway 123. Instead, the city will give the developer additional time to address the eyesore.

However, council told Zoning Administrator Bob Vecchio to direct Clemson Grande Lakefront Condominiums LLC to immediately secure the property due to concerns over vagrants living on the property and potential safety hazards.

"We have eyesores, but we can't stand behind public safety and not get that secured," said council member Jeremy Guthrie.

Vecchio told council he was recently informed by developer Chuck Ruff that only a couple of items were needed for DHEC approval to demolish the existing building. After speaking with Robin Mack of DHEC, Vecchio said an asbestos property inspection report was received last Friday.

Vecchio said DHEC officials informed him that it plans to do an inspection of the property on Mar. 15 and, if comfortable with the findings, will allow the demolition to proceed.

Clemson Grande Lakefront Condominiums announced plans for a $5 million condominium project in September 2006. The project was to

SEE INN, PAGE 5A

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JESSICA NELMS | FILE PHOTO

Clemson City Council has directed staff to secure the vacant Lake Hartwell Inn due to concerns over vagrants living on the property and potential safety hazards while efforts to proceed with its ultimate demolition continue.

City holds on demolition

PAGE 1

to feature 93 residential units and 50,000

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Larry Abernathy
Clemson mayor

square feet of commercial space — including two restaurants.

But a tough economy ground the project to a halt and demolition work stopped in the summer of 2008. Despite the fact that Vecchio said he has been promised numerous times that demolition would ultimately resume, no progress has been made up to this point.

A metal fence was installed around the property but City Council and police officials say individuals — including vagrants — have repeatedly entered the property.

"This is wrong — this is really, really wrong, and I want to know where Mr. Ruff is," said Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy. "If we issue an order to secure it, it's as if we're willing to settle instead of doing something substantive."

As much as they desire to see the Lake Hartwell Inn "eyesore" permanently removed, especially since the site serves as a gateway into the city, Abernathy and council agreed that the biggest concern at this time is ensuring the safety of its citizens by securing the premises.

"There's a lot of rubble, a lot of trash stacked up," Abernathy said. "There's no question in my mind that this is a threat to health and safety."

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