

Partners added to Cliffs rescue

Bankrupt clubs get Carlisle loan

By Anna Lee

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Texas-based Carlisle Development Group has made moves to bolster The Cliffs Communities, loaning \$9.5 million to maintain club operations as it works through Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

ClubCo, shorthand for the Cliffs Club & Hospitality Group, is a subsidiary of Cliffs Communities, whose members in 2010 loaned a combined \$64 million to keep the network of golf courses and clubhouses operational.

The 535 members, who paid amounts from \$50,000 to \$400,000 out of their own pockets, would be paid back without interest under terms of a deal with Carlisle Group, lawyers said during a bankruptcy hearing in Columbia earlier this month.

Since then, Carlisle has partnered with SunTx Urbana, the primary lot and landowner of The Cliffs properties, and Arendale Holdings, a real estate and development company specializing in golf club operations, according to an announcement Friday.

"Through this partnership with Urbana and Arendale, our team is better able to deliver a viable solution that overcomes current challenges while providing the long-term stability The Cliffs needs," said founder Steve Carlisle.

That includes a new membership plan, expected to roll out April 13, and negotiations with other large landowners to consolidate sales objectives for the remaining Cliffs properties, where over 90 separate land deals, foreclosures and suits have yet to be resolved, according to Carlisle's website.

"We feel strongly that this partnership delivers the unique capabilities needed to move The Cliffs forward quickly and professionally in a way that builds member confidence and positions the communities for future growth," said Hugh Conerty of Arendale Holdings.

The Carlisle Group will also assume \$1.4 million in mechanics liens, \$1.1 million in taxes and \$4.3 million in other bills while footing the expenses needed to finish a multimillion-dollar golf course at The Cliffs at Mountain Park, according to terms disclosed in bankruptcy court.

And Carlisle will provide \$85 million under the proposed terms to purchase real estate, the sale of which would fuel The Cliffs' operations, lawyers said at the hearing.

Bill Rothschild, a Georgia lawyer representing The Carlisle Group, told a judge then that his clients "are trying to bring some order out of chaos."

ClubCo could emerge from bankruptcy as early as June or as late as the fourth quarter of 2012, according to Carlisle's website.

■ Staff writer David Dykes contributed to this report.