Stumphouse upgrades sought

Walhalla looks for site to build visitors station and house park ranger

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WALHALLA — Officials plan to continue looking for a location near the grounds of Stumphouse Tunnel and Issaqueena Falls where they can build a visitors station and house a volunteer park ranger.

Walhalla city councilman David Underwood said Friday that four potential sites he presented earlier this week failed to make the grade.

"We're going to pursue looking at more spots," Underwood said. "There was one where the old bathrooms used to be that I like, but we don't know whether it'll be feasible or not. Before we finalize anything, we need to make sure Upstate Forever and the city are in agreement and working together on it."

Stumphouse and the surrounding 1,000 acres off S.C. Highway 28 were preserved in a conservation easement after Upstate Forever and local civic leader joined forces in 2007 to stop a Florida developer from turning the natural attraction into a gated housing community. Walhalla still owns and maintains the upkeep of the falls, parking facilities and a small reservoir above the falls.

City officials began charging $2 parking at the Stumphouse Tunnel and Issaqueena Falls last year using an honor system. Some 60,000 people each year visit the attraction.



FILE

Walhalla officials are looking for a spot near Stumphouse Tunnel to build a visitors station and house a volunteer park ranger.

City administrator Nancy Goehle told council this week that a little more than one-third of the visitors are paying the parking fee.

Officials think parking fees would increase with the presence of a park ranger, or volunteer host, as Goehle likes to call the position.

Mayor Danny Edwards said the idea has been brought up by campers who live here and have done it in other places.

"If you furnish a place for a camper, they will be a volunteer host," Edwards said. "That's what we're looking at. In the summer we could probably pick someone up from the northern states. In the winter time we could get someone from Florida that would like to come to the mountains."

Underwood said Upstate Forever, an organization dedicated to preserving the Upstate's beautiful areas and natural resources from being turned into concrete by developers, is excited about working with the city to enhance the Stumphouse and Issaqueena areas for the enjoyment of the public.

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