



## CONSERVATION EASEMENT UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR SOME OF LAUREL RIDGE

The following is the e-mail update that was sent to all Laurel Ridge POA membership. If you have an e-mail address and want to be part of all our mailings, please send your address to :  
**Cheryl Fernandez email: cferna2@bellsouth.net**

Developers who purchased 550 acres of Laurel Ridge land in late 2007 are negotiating with undisclosed groups that might pay those developers to put some of that Laurel Ridge property into a conservation easement, their attorney told the Laurel Ridge Property Owners Association Board of Directors.

Absolutely no details or commitments were offered in the meeting May 27.

The meeting with the POA Board had been requested by attorney Michael Begley, representing the developers, and attorney Jim Atkins, representing Christian Believers United. The meeting was proposed by Begley as a meeting of the developers and the boards of both CBU and the POA. The purpose of the meeting was for the POA Board to hear a presentation from the developers about their plans for the Laurel Ridge property.

Unfortunately, Begley said, the planners had not yet finished their work and he had no plans or specifics to share. The investors who purchased the property did not attend the meeting. Jim Jackson, Ivory Haynes and attorney Atkins represented CBU. Almost all of the Laurel Ridge POA Board attended.

Begley said it was possible that the planners could finish in seven days. He also said it was possible that the land use plan for about half of the land in Laurel Ridge might not be ready for presentation for 60 days or more. When the plan is finished and the conservation easement has been negotiated, he said, more information would be

shared with the POA Board.

A conservation easement is a way to create a "Land Trust" that legally restricts the use and development of a piece of land. For example, in 1996 the City of Asheville donated a conservation easement on the 22,000-acre North Fork Watershed, adjacent to Laurel Ridge, which means that the watershed can never be developed. There are various private foundations and wealthy individuals who will pay for such conservation easements to keep North Carolina's beautiful ridge tops, mountain slopes and drinking water supplies from being developed.

The May 27 meeting was a result of the POA Board's work with attorney Ron Sneed to protect property rights and values for all of Laurel Ridge's owners.

The 2007 land sale from CBU to the developers includes hundreds of acres of wilderness land that CBU, the developer of Laurel Ridge, had described to lot buyers as a "Nature Preserve" that would be forever untouched by development. In addition, the agreement between CBU and the developers portrays CBU as the owner of the Laurel Ridge roads and water system, while the POA believes those assets belong to the property owners association. The settlement of these stark differences of opinion may require legal action, and the POA board has been working with attorney Ron Sneed to examine its options.

The POA Board retains all of its options to challenge the sale agreement, but was very encouraged that the developers who purchased the Laurel Ridge land were considering putting at least some of the land into a Conservation Easement, which would forever restrict the land from certain uses.

As soon as further information on this very important issue is available, your POA Board will publish it to you.

Thom Hill, Vice President of Laurel Ridge POA