

Great Barrington

Log Homes demolition awaits funding

By Derek Gentile

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GREAT BARRINGTON — A representative for the owner of New England Log Homes said his organization is putting together funding to cover the costs of demolition of the long-defunct Bridge Street property.

Timothy Geller, executive director of the South Berkshire Community Development Corp., said recently that his

organization is in the process of identifying funding sources for the project.

The CDC currently has commitments for about \$400,000 to cover the demolition costs, he said. The overall cost of taking down the buildings and cleaning up the seven-acre parcel is about \$1.3 million.

Once the money is raised, said Geller, "we would be ready to go. We're about as shovel-ready as any project can be."

Geller said his organization is looking

at funds from the recently approved federal economic stimulus package to fill in some of that shortfall. The bill is awaiting President Barack Obama's signature, which is expected to come Tuesday.

"We think it's an excellent candidate for [economic] stimulus funds," said Geller. The CDC and the town have submitted a request for funding. "We believe the site has superior economic

development potential."

The property was abandoned in 1994 in the wake of the bankruptcy of the parent company, New England Log Homes, Inc. The property decayed slowly over the years, but a fire the late 1990s accelerated the degradation of the site. Abutters and concerned residents have complained over the years to town officials about the

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CDC looks for funding

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unsightliness of the parcel, as well as the potential hazard the property holds for trespassers.

Geller said the CDC is weighing plans for a 40,000-square-foot retail space and 50 to 70 housing units.

"That's a rough estimate," said Geller of the plan. "We don't have firm numbers yet."

A spokeswoman for Gov. Deval L. Patrick's office said the state will be examining the "thousands and thousands" of proposals that have come across the governor's desk in the coming weeks.

"Once the federal [economic stimulus] package is passed, and that will be as soon as early as [this] week, then we have to take

a look at which projects will be eligible for funding and which will not," she said. "We don't plan on doing anything until the bill is passed. That will, admittedly, be pretty quickly, however."

Massachusetts is expected to receive at least \$11.7 billion under the package approved by Congress on Friday, according to the Center for American Progress, a Washington-based advocacy group that has supported the bill. Although a lion's share of the funding, almost \$8 billion, is earmarked for transportation upgrades, the spokeswoman said projects that foster job creation, like the Log Homes property, "are under consideration. It's a matter of seeing what we can do and what we can't."