

Council to consider purchasing Cherokee Queen I

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Members of the Grove City Council will vote whether to approve receiving one of the Cherokee Queen riverboats as a gift during the second meeting of February.

The meeting takes place at 6 p.m. at the Grove Community Center, Room 5.

The Grove Chamber of Commerce has been approached by Larry Steckline, owner of the Cherokee Queen Riverboats, in regards to “gifting” the Cherokee Queen I to the city.

The initial proposal is for the city to lease the boat to the Grove Area Chamber of Commerce for a minimal amount in return for operating the boat as an attraction.

The 67-foot Cherokee Queen I, built in 1945, was a popular attraction with tourists and Grand Lake residents for decades. The Cherokee Queen II, the larger riverboat, was added in 1986.

The riverboats, which specialized in scenic cruises, parties and weddings on Grand Lake, sit west of Grove adjacent to Sail Boat Bridge.

The Cherokee Queen I [DockTails] would remain docked, according to city documents.

Any improvements above and beyond related to safety issues, officials from the Grove Area Chamber of Commerce would lead a capital fundraising effort - “Save the Queen” -seeking donations, sponsorships and grants.

The riverboats are the center of a four-year-old legal dispute involving former Seneca-Cayuga Nation chief Lee Roy Howard.

The tribe purchased the Cherokee Queen riverboats and Royal Bay Restaurant, Royal Bay Convention Center and Royal Bay Marina for \$3.9 million, according to records filed March 21, 2012, in the county clerk’s office.

However, a civil lawsuit filed by Steckline, who sold the riverboats to the Tribe, showed Howard agreed to pay \$8 million [including interest] and misled tribal officials and members about the purchase price, if the repayment schedule went the full 10-years.

In August 2018, Steckline took possession of the Royal Bay Marina and the two vessels. At that time he hoped to have the larger of the two boats up and running for the 2019 summer season.

Steckline was awarded a \$6.973 million judgement against the tribe in December.

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