

McLemore Cove group eyes historic district rezoning

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CEDAR GROVE, Ga. — Members of the McLemore Cove Preservation Society have asked Walker County officials about the possible protective benefits to the cove that a historic overlay district might have.

After meeting with Walker County Commissioner Bebe Heiskell and County Attorney



Bebe Heiskell

Don Oliver at the Hidden Hollow Resort on Sunday, society members agreed to meet in executive committee and decide whether or not to back the proposed historic zoning district at a later date.

"We would like to keep (McLemore Cove) rural and agricultural rather than convert it to urban sprawl," society chairman John Webb said.

If enacted, the proposed overlay district could make zoning rules as restrictive as residents wanted them to be, Mr. Oliver said.



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY STUMP MARTIN

Scenic and historic McLemore Cove is a treasure that should be preserved and protected, according to members of a new group established to do just that.

"We're looking at every facet of tourism. We'd like to offer guidelines," Ms. Heiskell said.

County officials dominated conversation while preservation society members and area residents primarily listened, asked questions and voiced opinions.

"When you change an area from agricultural to residential, you're hurting your neighbors,"

McLemore Cove resident Charles Shaw said.

Mr. Shaw lives near the site of Bailey's Crossroads, historic as a site of Civil War conflict between Union troops and Confederate soldiers on their way to Chickamauga in 1863.

When Chickamauga City Manager John Culpepper suggested putting historical trail



STAFF GRAPHIC BY BECK TOWERY

markers at Civil War sites for tourists, including one at Bailey's Crossroads, Mr. Shaw said, "But that's my driveway."

No vote is needed to set up the historic overlay district, Ms. Heiskell said, but the public should get to express their views on it.

"If you don't spring things on people, give them a long time to look at it and think about it, they usually recognize it's a good thing," Ms. Heiskell said.

Ms. Heiskell and Mr. Oliver said the overlay district plan's

zoning rules could prevent overdevelopment and maintain, if not improve, property values.

"A lot of people have their farms, and that's their savings account," Mr. Oliver said. He said individual property holders also could set up conservation easements to prevent development and land depreciation.

"It's really the effort of the local residents and neighbors that guide or don't guide business and development or residential growth," said Jim Ogden, chief historian at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. "It's incumbent on the local community to organize."

McLemore Cove, a 33,333-acre swath of land nestled between Pigeon Mountain and Lookout Mountain in North Georgia, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of several sites that are significant to the Civil War, mining and American Indian history.

"(The Department of Economic Development) thinks we have a gold mine here, as far as tourism and natural resources go," Ms. Heiskell said.

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