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Nolan Fieldhouse sold

Voice of God Recordings Inc. purchases athletic facility

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SELLERSBURG — Nolan Fieldhouse has been sold, but not to the town of Sellersburg.

The 28,500-square-foot basketball and community center, and six acres of adjacent land on Progress Way, was sold to Voice of God Recordings Inc. for \$1.65 million, according to Clark County property records.

The purchase price — which was consequently the same as one of the appraisal values given for the property last year — was substantially more than the price offered to the town of Sellersburg last spring. Christopher Nolan, former owner of the fieldhouse, offered the facility to Sellersburg for \$890,000.

“They declined to purchase it,” he said. “We were really upset about it. I was shocked the [town] didn’t buy it.”

Sellersburg began leasing Nolan Fieldhouse in March 2009, after it had closed as a private business. But the town claimed it had been losing money to keep the facility open.

During the nine months the fieldhouse was open in 2009, Sellersburg lost an average of \$7,749 per month, according to a report provided by the town. In 2010, there was a \$10,823-per-month fieldhouse deficit for the town, with the annual income cited at \$182,000 and expenditures at \$312,000. However, Sellersburg continued to make lease payments of \$6,900 per month to keep the facility open through June 2011.

During the time Sellersburg was leasing the fieldhouse, Nolan offered it to be purchased at the discounted price. He said he was hoping to sell it to the town, so it would remain an activities center for the community.

“I think it should have been bought for the kids and not too many people have the money to do this,” Nolan said. “I would have rather it stayed a fieldhouse.”

But the town’s potential purchase of the facility became a contentious issue amongst many Sellersburg residents. Those that wanted Sellersburg to purchase the facility pointed to it being an asset to the community that draws in visitors for athletic tournaments and games,

and that the town could open it to other community activities to help cover the operational expenses.

Detractors of the deal pointed to the losses incurred month-to-month and offered hesitations about the town purchasing a private business.

Although the Sellersburg Town Council didn't take an official vote on whether or not to purchase the fieldhouse, the decision was effectively made in May 2011, when the council decided it would not seek a grant. The \$200,000 grant was offered by Clark-Floyd Counties Convention and Tourism Bureau, and was turned down in a 3-2 vote, with Councilmen Brian Meyer and Terry Langford voting to pursue the grant. Meyer added, at the time of the vote, the town was in talks with the township trustee for \$100,000 and an anonymous donation of \$1,000 to go toward the purchase of the fieldhouse and would bring the town's cost down to \$574,000.

With the deal with Sellersburg dead, Nolan again took control of the fieldhouse July 1. Shortly after regaining control, Nolan said he was approached by Voice of God Recordings Inc. to purchase the site, a deal that was finalized in late-December. He said the purchase price of \$1.65 million recorded with the county was solely for the real estate and did not include the equipment in the fieldhouse, which was also sold as part of the deal. The total was closer to \$2 million, he said.

Messages left with Voice of God Recordings and Branham Tabernacle were not returned. Nolan said he believed the fieldhouse will be used as a private facility for the children in the church.

When asked about the deal following Sellersburg's Monday town council meeting, officials with the town said they did not know if it had been finalized and they have not been in contact with the tabernacle about whether or not the facility would be available for public use.

"I think it's a big miss for Sellersburg," Nolan said of the failed deal.