

Governor behind \$7-million real estate deal?

Buyer of Mirbeau-Hummel property uses Pritzker Group's address

By Scott Williams

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A company with apparent ties to Illinois' new billionaire governor has spent nearly \$7 million to purchase more than 400 acres of prime Lake Geneva real estate that once was at the center of a fierce battle over development.

Walworth Equity Partners LLC has purchased about two-thirds of the property commonly known as the Mirbeau-Hummel development site, located on the city's south side next to Big Foot Beach State Park.

The buyer registered as a new Wisconsin corporation effective March 1,

with its principal office location listed at the same downtown Chicago address as the Pritzker Group, owned by Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker.

Officials at the Pritzker Group declined to comment about the Lake Geneva deal, and a spokesman in the governor's office would only say that Pritzker has distanced himself from the company's business dealings since being elected in November.

A real estate broker on the land



Pritzker

deal, Rick Cortopassi, called it "highly likely" that Pritzker's company is associated with the buyer group called Walworth Equity Partners.

Cortopassi said the Pritzker Group tried to buy the same Lake Geneva property about 10 years ago. Noting also that the newly elected governor has for years owned a nearby luxury lakefront home, Cortopassi added of Pritzker's involvement in the current deal: "I don't have any have idea, but it's highly likely."

The broker said representatives of the buyer gave no hints about whether they intend to develop the site, which includes about 480 acres of farmland.

PLEASE SEE LAND ON 7A



A for-sale sign stands along South Lake Shore Drive on the edge of the former Mirbeau-Hummel development site in Lake Geneva. (Photo by Scott Williams/Regional News)