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‘Off-the-grid’ home, recently auctioned Cougar Island land on the market for \$3.7 million

BY NICOLE BLANCHARD SEPTEMBER 29, 2022 4:50 PM J

A 2.3-acre parcel of state-managed land recently sold in an auction went back on the market just over one week later, this time with the “one-of-a-kind” residence that sits on the parcel included.

On Sept. 14, Bellevue attorney Jim Laski was the sole bidder for the state-owned piece of Cougar Island, the largest island in McCall’s Payette Lake. He bid just over \$2 million for the parcel, which was the assessed value of the land.

No one else bid on the other four Cougar Island parcels or the island as a whole. Laski has leased the land he bought since 2013, and he owns the 3-bed, 3-bath home, which was built in 1997. It wasn’t immediately clear when Laski purchased the home.

1 Big Cougar Island was listed last weekend at \$3.7 million — \$1.7 million more than he paid for the land alone. The listing stipulates that the buyer must be able to close by mid-November. In a news release about the auction, the Department of Lands said Laski would have 30 to 60 days to close on the land with a potential 30-day extension. Department of Lands spokesperson Sharla Arledge told the Statesman in an email that the agency would need to sign off if Laski hoped to transfer the auction contract to someone else.

Laski declined to comment, citing the pending state contract, but real estate agent Sadie Noah, who “We’re trying to be very transparent in the advertising so people understand what they’re getting,” Noah said. “It’s seasonal access, off the grid, an extremely unique property.”

Noah, who served as caretaker for the property before Laski purchased it, said local craftsmen built the home. It boasts a stone exterior, oak and walnut flooring, cherry wood cabinets and a wraparound porch.

“I think the house was built to probably withstand a hurricane,” Noah said.

The home is connected to a solar power system and is heated by seven propane stoves. Noah said the homeowner will need to barge propane out to the island to refill the fireplaces and the home’s propane backup generator.

Other features include a private beach and wood-fired hot tub. The property is accessible only by boat, meaning it’s typically inaccessible in the winter or during inclement weather.

“It’s a challenge to show it to people because you have to get everyone in a boat (and drive out to the island),” Noah said.

A full tour of the home is available on Zillow. The real estate website estimates monthly mortgage payments for the property would be around \$21,600.

The four other parcels that make up Cougar Island are still under state control. Earlier this month, the Department of Lands said it would “evaluate the next step for the other parcels on the island.” Two McCall conservation groups — United Payette and the Payette Land Trust — previously expressed interest in buying or leasing the remaining parcels to preserve as open space.