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# Seashore Record Cited In Denying Conflict Charges

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RALEIGH — Sen. William W. Staton, D-Lee, said Tuesday there is no conflict of interest involved in his representing owners of disputed property within the proposed Cape Lookout National Seashore.

Staton is chairman of the Senate Natural and Economic Resources Committee.

He also said some news reports have gotten the facts wrong about his clients' case.

At a news conference which

he called, Staton suggested that reporters who did not accept his viewpoint might be fools.

"It has been said that when confronted with facts, a wise man will change his mind, but a fool never changes his," he said.

Staton said the facts are that he has represented Charles M. Reeves Jr. and Sam Q. Bass of Sanford for more than 12 years. His association with them predates the Cape Lookout National Seashore, he said.

He said Reeves and Bass have never refused to sell the

approximately 520 acres they own near the Cape Lookout Lighthouse.

The state has appealed a price set by a court-appointed commission, Staton said.

The price which the commission set was \$1,869,000. This was done after condemnation proceedings were brought by the state to acquire the land.

"The appraisal came from three men selected by the state through its judicial process," Staton said.

"Yet certain elements of the media continue to tell the

public that Charles Reeves Jr. has refused a \$1,869,000 offer, reportedly 'because he thinks he could get up to \$4 million for the land if he sold to developers,'" Staton said, referring to a newspaper clipping.

Staton would not identify the newspapers which made that claim. He said there were four or five of them.

"It is the state that has refused to pay the amount set by the commissioners that has appealed this decision, further slowing up the state's

ownership of this property," he said.

"The state has made us no offer whatsoever since the commission set the price."

Before the appraisal was made, Staton said the state's first offered \$137,000, then, in 1970, offered \$227,000 for the land.

"I do not know if we would accept the appraised price, if it is offered," Staton said. "I would certainly take it up with Mr. Reeves.

"Personally, I do not think it is a fair amount, but I do not

say I would not advise him to take it."

Of the possibility of conflict of interest, Staton said, "If this conflict of interest charge is based on the assumption that my clients are purposely delaying and trying to block the seashore, this is an entirely false assumption."

He said he has either sponsored or cosponsored numerous bills involving parks, protection of beaches, control of pollution and protection of natural resources.

He also has been involved

since July in hearings on Coastal Area Management bill which he sponsored.

"I certainly do not want any hint of suspicion to mar the work of my committee," he said.

"But the Outer Banks are not my sole responsibility as chairman of the Senate committee. My responsibility, as I see it, encompasses all of North Carolina's resources."

Staton said he gets "more than a little impatient" with

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