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Bank holding mortgages buys convicted SC economist's properties

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — A mansion, beach house and two other properties belonging to an economist who admitted defrauding hundreds of investors sold for about \$3.5 million at an auction Tuesday.

The properties owned by Al Parish were bought by the National Bank of South Carolina, which already held mortgages on the property, said David Dantzer, an attorney helping tally Parish's assets.

A lawyer representing the bank would not comment after the auction.

About 100 people turned out for the auction, held in a warehouse amid antique chairs, tables and paintings. In all, the auction lasted about 10 minutes.

Parish's 2,000-square-foot house on Edisto Beach brought \$1.55 million while his rambling 7,000-square-foot mansion in Summerville sold for \$900,000. His Edisto Beach condo sold for \$415,000 and a town house in Charleston's historic district got \$750,000.

Parish, a former Charleston Southern University economist with a penchant for loud sports coats and flashy cars, pleaded guilty last year to fraud and lying to investigators. Parish is under house arrest. A date for his sentencing has not been set.

Authorities allege his investment company swindled investors out of an estimated \$90 million.

Dantzer said if the auction had brought in \$4.5 million, there would have been money left over to reimburse investors after paying mortgages, taxes and other claims against the property.

"But from our point of view, we effectively solved \$4.5 million worth of debt. They've got it and we don't have to pay anything more," he said.

Last year, an auction of Parish's other belongings, including high-end watches and guitars said to have been owned by Jimmy Hendrix and George Harrison, brought in \$2.3 million.

Some of Parish's belongings remain to be sold, including animation art, paintings and coins. Some are for sale at auction houses around the country.

Dantzer expects to file a report in federal court outlining what has been sold and how much investors might recover, but he did not want to give a figure until the report is filed.

"I'm feeling much better today than the day we walked into this case," he said, adding that he initially thought investors might only recover 5 cents on the dollar.

A housing slump was perhaps not the best time for the auction.

"In this case there is no choice because the maintenance on these properties is eating them up," said auctioneer Ed Roumillat. "They had to do it."

There were no bargains, said Richard C. Davis, president of Trademark Properties, who attended but did not bid.

"There's a ton of supply. There's a normal amount of demand," he said. "Real estate is a cycle and we're at the bottom of the cycle now."

Two of the four properties sold for their real estate listing prices. One brought \$50,000 more and one \$15,000 less.

Parish claimed amnesia when authorities announced their investigation almost a year ago. A psychiatrist said at the time the condition was stress-induced and that his memory has since improved.



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