

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

Levitt to give burned buyers first shot at finished homes

Levitt and Sons buyers who lost their deposits when the company filed for bankruptcy will get the first crack at purchasing finished homes in four Florida communities, including three in Central Florida.

Court-appointed receiver Andrew J. Bolnick and his legal counsel, Weissman, Dervishi, Borgo & Nordlund P.A., say a series of private sales events for those buyers will be held Tuesday and Wednesday. Bolnick says Broward Circuit Court Judge Robert A. Rosenberg has approved the plan to offer credit toward the purchase price on an already-built model or spec home for deposits previously made to the Fort Lauderdale-based homebuilder.

The communities are Cascades of Groveland in Lake County; Jesup's Reserve, Winter Springs in Seminole County; Turtle Creek, St. Cloud in Osceola County and Cascades at River Hall, Alva in Lee County.

"Sadly, many residents, primarily senior citizens over the age of 55, lost their chance for a new home and a new beginning," Bolnick says in a news release. "These depositors who lost their down payment are just another creditor in bankruptcy court; but to us, they are valuable purchasers. Through our innovative plan, we will do our best to credit them for their initial down payment to Levitt and get them into their homes."

Bolnick says each potential sales contract will be brought to the court for approval. Once approved, the liens are to be shifted by court order from the home to the proceeds of the sale.

Bolnick says he expects some sales to close by the end of May or in early June.

Levitt Corp.'s Levitt and Sons filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in November 2007.

Last Tuesday, Levitt Corp. posted a first quarter loss and said it continues to carry some of the subsidiary's expenses and overhead.

The Fort Lauderdale-based company says it lost \$10.4 million, or 11 cents a share, on revenue of \$900,000. In the prior-year quarter, it earned \$976,000, or 5 cents a share, on revenue of \$143.2 million.

Levitt Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levan, who is also the chairman and CEO of **BankAtlantic Bancorp**, has asked shareholders to approve changing Levitt's name to Woodbridge Financial Corp. The issue will be brought before Levitt's May 20 annual meeting.

Levitt (NYSE: LEV) shares closed down 6 cents to \$1.45. The 52-week high was \$11.52 on June 5. The 52-week low was \$1.40 on March 17.