



John Ince

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Please Beware!

I recently had a request by text to list a five acre lot in southern Albemarle. Seller was out of state and needed to be able to close in absentia. I looked up the property in the county records and drove out to have a look at the lot. The seller had purchased the property in 2022 for \$75,000 and wanted to sell it for \$75,000. I told him it was a very nice lot and he could ask a higher price. He said no, he wanted a quick sale so I emailed him the listing agreement and I listed it for \$75,000. We had several showings and quite a bit of interest and shortly had an offer for \$65,000 which he agreed to if it could close in 3 weeks. Everything seemed in order, buyer got soil work completed and Seller sent his signed and notarized closing package to the settlement agent but then a title defect was discovered regarding state road access. I called neighbors and the previous owner to try and resolve the access issue. The previous owner called me a couple of hours after I called him and told me he had called the owner of the property whom he knew and he had no intention of selling the property, had no idea it had been listed. Turns out the fake owner was just that, he'd assumed the real owner's identity and almost pulled off a fake sale which would have gone through had it not been for the title issue. The buyer, a Realtor we all know was disappointed but understanding and relieved that his only loss was the soil work and time. It could have been much worse. Lesson for me was to confirm ownership of unknown clients with picture ID's and referrals and realize that this kind of fraud is becoming more and more prevalent. We assume the fake seller just trolled county records and picked a vacant property with an out of state owner and then picked a Realtor to work the listing. I've shared all my correspondence with the real owner who lives out of state. He immediately got in touch with FBI who promised very little and had since been in touch with local law enforcement. His biggest fear is that other parts of his identity may have been compromised but so far it doesn't seem so. Red flags in retrospect were how his well worded texts and emails contrasted with his spoken word when we talked on the phone. He also kept telling me he would pay a higher commission for a quicker sale. Now I know. I hope this will help you as well. Please share.

[John Ince](#)