

Call made for more lake protection

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — A local resident active in managing growth on Lake Keowee is calling on the Oconee County Council to retool the Lake Overlay District zoning provisions.

Gary Owens of Wynward Pointe recently recommended that council move quickly to strengthen the lake overlay "to include lake residential zoning performance measures."

Owens is spearheading the nearly 3,000-parcel Keowee Key/Stamp Creek rezoning petition and by his own admission his proposal is an attempt to partly regulate a large parcel that the Oconee County Planning Commission and Planning Department have recommended be allowed to remain in

the Control Free District.

The vast majority of parcels in the Keowee Key/Stamp Creek petition would be rezoned Lake Residential District.

Owens told council during public comments last week that he's met with the owners of the large parcel in question. He said the parcel has several hundred feet of shoreline on Lake Keowee and that the owners told him the land is being used for the growing and harvesting of timber.

"While I do believe this is their sincere intention, I am concerned about the future protection of the lake when this parcel changes hands, as it undoubtedly will in time," Owens said.

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LAKE: Barton declined to comment; she

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Owens went on to say that he understood the owners' position that not all of their land should be lake residential because it stretches so far from the lake-shore.

Roberta Barton, the attorney representing local residents in a zoning dispute against Oconee County, is related to the owners of the parcel referenced by Owens.

The lawsuit brought by Jean Jennings and David and Michelle McMahan against the county and others, also names Owens as a defendant.

Barton was present at last week's council meeting when Owens brought up his recommendation to include lake residential zoning performance measures to the Lake Overlay District.

Barton declined to comment because she had not read Owens'

proposal.

Owens thinks his proposal would effectively deal with large parcels that have small areas abutting the lake. He said large parcel owners would not have to be placed in an "either/or" situation, but rather "zone their land in concert with their land use."

Owens said the lake overlay with lake residential measures would protect land adjacent to the shoreline. The Lake Overlay

had not read Owens' proposal

District measures 750-feet from full pond of the lake.

"What I hope council would do is to strengthen the overlay significantly," Owens said Friday.

Owens added that special exceptions could be made for commercial activity, such as a restaurant, or other appropriate business ventures.

A former president of Advocates for Quality Development Inc., Owens said the overlay recommendation was his personal

proposal.

He's hopeful that council will act on his idea and send it to the Planning Commission for its review.

Planning Commission Chairman Ryan Honea said he expects the planners to look at strengthening the overlay as part of its review of the county's Zoning Enabling Ordinance that council requested.

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A Lake Keowee resident is calling on the Oconee County Council to strengthen the Lake Overlay District by adding restrictive lake residential zoning measures. The overlay extends 750-feet from full pond.

FILE PHOTO