County OKs Keowee River plan with proviso

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — The developer planning a $200 million project property off of Highway 130 got the green light from county officials Wednesday to move forward with initiatives that vary from county standards.

Members of the County's Transportation Committee gave Keowee River project developer Scott Vick the go-ahead to implement low-impact development (LID) initiatives will require tweaking county road standards and density rules, among other things.

Vick said variances are essential to minimize the disturbance of green space and wetlands at the site.

Committee Chairman Joel Thrift made it clear that the panel's endorsement is based on the understanding that the development's roads would remain private. Thrift said that if for any reason the roads ended up in the county's control they would have to revert to standards applied countywide.

"We want to work with you, but it's with that understanding," Thrift said.

Vick said he understood and agreed with the conditions.

The committee made its recommendation after hearing from Planning Director Art Holbrooks and Public Works Director Mack Kelly, who said public safety would not be compromised because the developer would still have to comply with state codes regarding the ability of emergency vehicles to move in and out of the area without problems.

Holbrooks has said that if anything, Vick is imposing a higher standard of development with what he is attempting to achieve.

As envisioned by the developer, the master-planned community would be built in five phases over 20 years. The initial phase, which is slated for ground breaking this year, includes the building of a new YMCA.

Also planned are single-family homes, townhouses, villas and cottages, a waterfront park, hotel and conference center, an outdoor amphitheater, restaurants and retail shops.

carlos@dailyjrn.com | (864) 973-6685