County approves lease deal with Duke

BY MIKAYLA KREUZBERGER
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — An Oconee County subcommittee voted Monday to send a lease agreement with Duke Energy to full council for review, which would allow the county to place a dock on Lake Keowee for emergency watercraft vehicles.



McCall



Moulder

The dock would be located at Mosquito Point, an area of shoreline near Doug Hollow Road in Seneca, and would hold several county Sheriff's patrol boats, a potential county fireboat and other jurisdictional vessels.

"This is to shorten our response time at the lake for drownings, for fires. This will enhance (the county), as we will have a site where there is a boat already in the water (for emergencies)," said County Council member Wayne McCall, who chairs the Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health and Welfare (LEPSHW) Committee.

Oconee County Administrator Scott Moulder said the dock was donated to the county, and costs are nominal.

"The lease agreement has no costs to it," Moulder said. "It basically just defines what the county's going to do, what Duke Energy is going to allow us to do ...

"We'll have a storage building with some diving equipment. All of this is of minimal cost to us. We had to pay for some surveying as we worked through what Duke Energy wanted out there."

Moulder said without a dock, it typically takes an hour for the county's emergency services crews to respond to emergencies on the lake.

SEE DEAL, PAGE A5

Sheriff, county considers banning drug paraphernalia, texting, page A5.

DEAL: 'It's easier access for them'

FROM PAGE A1

"This would provide us a more reduced response time, utilizing staff that is already at the station a few miles away," Moulder said.

Firefighters at the Keowee Fire Department near the Keowee Key development would respond to fire emergencies.

"We've worked with Keowee Key as a paid response system. They've donated their willingness to respond and utilize the fire boat in the event we have a call on the lake," Moulder said.

The Oconee County Sheriff's Office marine unit would mostly use the county dock during the busiest four months of the year, including the entire first week of July.

"This will give them the capability of keeping their boats there so they're not constantly having to pull it in and out of the water," Moulder said. "It's easier access for them."

Currently, Mosquito Point is a gated area that remains unlocked during normal business hours; although the lease provides the opportunity to fence in the area, Moulder said it is not in the county's plan to build a fence.

The proposed dock is approved for that area, and the survey implicates where dock access is located. McCall said the dock consists of a pier with pilings that provides access to a ramp and to the floating dock.

"The dock is deep enough that even if the water is down, we won't be sitting on the bottom," McCall said.

County Council will consider the lease agreement at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

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