Developer to lake groups: 'Get used to commercial activity'

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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SALEM — The managing partner of a company looking to develop a Keowee marina near Stamp Creek on Highway 130 has a piece of advice for lake residents: "Get used to commercial activity."

Ray Fretwell said Tuesday that his company, Fretmac LLC, is waiting on permitting requirements from the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) to move forward with his Palmetto Pointe Marina project.

The public marina plans also include a 20-bed motel, restaurant, ship's store and storage for more than 200 boats.

The project is not regulated by Oconee because the county lacks standards to regulate commercial projects.

Andrea "Andy" Heller, the District 1 Commission member whose constituents include Lake Keowee residents, is pushing for new standards for the Lake Overlay District that would regulate commercial projects.

Heller said that marinas would be among the non-residential uses that the new standards would regulate.

However, Heller said Palmetto Pointe already has gone through the Planning Department and would be grandfathered in "if they get their ducks in a row."

Fretwell said he's aware there are lake groups, including Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS) and Advocates for Quality Development (AQD), which would never be supportive of what he's trying to develop.

"There's going to be commercial development around the lake, and they should get used to it," Fretwell said.

Fretwell said he's met privately with representatives of AQD and FOLKS at the offices of Goldie & Associates in Seneca, which is the engineering firm working with his project.

"We met, and they're nice and all, but they're not going to be supportive," Fretwell said.

Opponents of the Palmetto Pointe Marina project say the area does not have enough depth and would not support the additional boat traffic the marina would bring.

Heller said she thinks there will be commercial activity at the lake, but she said it should conform to the county's Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map.

"We want to protect this lake," Heller said. "The public deserves a voice."

On Monday night, the Planning Commission again took up a set of draft standards that could be added to the Lake Overlay District to regulate non-residential uses around the lake.

Standards include prohibiting fuel dispensing activities within 100 feet "from the closest point of any parcels;" requiring a 25-foot landscape buffer; requiring a specific number of shade trees, small evergreen trees and shrubs; dedicating at least 15 percent of the project area as greenspace, parking space regulations, lighting rules and steep slope protection.

Fretwell said the proposed standards should not pick on any one type of commercial activity.

He said the permitting process is long and arduous enough as it is. He said that after he gets permits from DHEC, the project would then need approval from Duke Energy, which controls shoreline management around the lake, and then finally federal approval.

"It's a long road, and I'm halfway down the road," Fretwell said.

The Commission put off taking action on the draft standards until it hears from a Duke Energy Shoreline management expert at its meeting Monday.

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