IndependentMail.com
ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Printer-friendly story
Read more at independentmail.com

Groundbreaking set Friday for new restaurant, largest on Lake Keowee

By Ray Chandler

Thursday, August 11, 2011

SENECA — The formal groundbreaking will be held Friday for what is said to be the largest restaurant on Lake Keowee, but construction is already under way and on track.

The foundation walls should begin to rise Monday, with framing to follow in about two weeks, said Richard Cottingham of Keowee Investors Inc., builders of the new enterprise.

"I guess you could say we've already technically broken ground," said Cottingham. "We're 10 months away from opening."

On Thursday, Cottingham and some of the other 25 investors in the project presented their plans for the site at 1290 Doug Hollow Road, near a small isthmus once dubbed Mosquito Point.

The name was never formally given, Cottingham said, and he hopes the location can be redubbed Lighthouse Point, for the Lighthouse Restaurant and Event Center, as the new enterprise will be known.

The octagonal two-story restaurant and bar will accommodate over 200 inside and on the wrap-around deck, Cottingham said, and will have adjacent to it a 4,000-square-foot glass-enclosed event center. A large central fireplace in the main building will be served by a 48-foot chimney that will look like a lighthouse and will serve as the restaurant's trademark.

A 10-slip boat dock will make the restaurant accessible from the lake as well as by road.

According to Cottingham, who is the general contractor for the project, the enterprise will incorporate "green" technology, such as such as pervious concrete, grass pavers, and rain catchments for irrigation.

The investment, excluding the kitchen equipment and furnishings, will total about $2 million, according to Cottingham.

The investors have already hired a manager, Edwin Lashley, and an assistant manager/ event coordinator, Andrew Merritt, but still have to hire a chef.

Merritt is owner of the Boulevard Grill in Clemson.

Both will be part-time consultants in the restaurant's development until about March, Cottingham said, when they will both become full-time employees.

The restaurant is projected to employ about 35 people with a $4 million annual payroll.

It will be the third, and the investors say, the largest restaurant on Lake Keowee, the others being the Tiki Hut in Seneca and the restaurant of The Cliffs community farther up the lake.

The restaurant's construction could begin only after the settlement of a controversy.

At issue were easements allowing access to the lake purportedly granted to the Kelley family as original owners of the property when portions of it were acquired by Crescent Land and Timber, an entity of Duke Energy, in 1966.

The plans for the restaurant required that a new section of Doug Hollow Road be built and that the present road be abandoned. Nearby landowners, principally members of the Kelley family, raised objections to the rerouting of Doug Hollow Road, which they say will cut off their longstanding access to the lake, particularly to a community boat ramp.

The land transferred in the 1966 deed had been sold multiple times before ending up with a portion of it owned by Lake Keowee Investors Inc.

However, according to Adam Artigliere, attorney for Oconee County, the grantors in each subsequent sale did not reserve any easements or access across the land for the Kelley family, as original owners, or their successors.

Oconee County filed a lawsuit in May asking the Circuit Court to determine what if any property rights existed.

The issue was settled last month by an agreement between the parties, the terms of which have not been disclosed.

Oconee County officials said Thursday that the paperwork intended to bring about the abandonment of the current road so that it can be relocated had not yet been completed, but that that was not an impediment to construction of the restaurant moving ahead.



© 2011 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online