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Keowee River project resurfaces

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WALHALLA — The developer of a proposed $200 million project near Seneca asked Oconee officials Wednesday for variances to current county road standards that would make the development more environmentally friendly and keep it on a fast track.

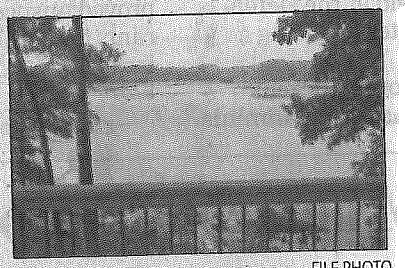
Scott Vick said the proposed changes would, among other things, maximize green spaces and protect wetland areas at the 774-acre project four miles north of Seneca on Highway 130.

Proposed changes include establishing private driveways to serve up to 10 lots, instead of the maximum three residential dwelling now permitted, and flexible easement requirements for utilities as needed instead of the minimum 50 feet right-of-way now in the books.

Vick made his presentation before the County Council's Transportation Committee. He said all the modifications are intended to minimize the environmental impact on the pristine location surrounded by lakes and mountains.

In the coming weeks, Vick said he would present the county with a formal developer agreement "to move the process forward."

Vick added that the agreement also is intended to remove the need for coming back to the county for variances throughout the 20-year build-out of the project.



FILE PHOTO

The developer of the proposed Keowee River development near Seneca asked county officials Wednesday for 22 variances to road standards.

"We want to get this going and get people back to work," Vick added.

Committee Chairman Joel thrift asked Vick whether the roads in the development would be private or public.

"Some of these things would move better if it remained private," Thrift said.

Councilman Wayne McCall also wanted to make sure that the county not be asked to take over any roads in the development.

"That's a problem," McCall said.

Councilman Paul Corbeil said the county wants to move forward with the project too and see jobs created. However, he said feedback from county staff would be needed to see the impact of the 22 variances requested.

Thrift asked the Road Department and Planning Department to report back at the next Transportation meeting on March 15.

"As long as taxpayers' money is not involved, I see no problem," Thrift said. "I think (the project) will be a tremendous asset to the county."

As envisioned by the developer, the master-planned community would include an initial building of a new YMCA on the grounds, single-family homes, townhouses, villas and cottages, a waterfront park, hotel and conference center, an outdoor amphitheater, restaurants and retail shops and extended care living facilities.