Seneca Daily Journal
3/2/2010

Keowee rezoning bid advances

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THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Lynn Elrod and her family own more than 12 acres that got caught up in the rezoning request dominated by more than 200 signatures from property owners near Lake Keowee that want their parcels classified as Lake Residential.

Elrod was among a group of property owners that made their case at Monday night's Planning Commission meeting against one-size-fits-all rezoning.

The Elrod property borders Keowee School Road and is among the parcels furthest away from the lake among the 371 properties included in the rezoning proposal.

Elrod said that with a close relative in an assisted living facility, and not knowing what the future holds, her family did not want to commit to any classification.

"Because we really don't know what we want, we ask to be exempt from this petition," Elrod said. "We want to remain control free."

District 1 Commission member Andrea "Andy" Heller said she spoke to groups of people whose biggest gripe about the process was that they felt out of the loop.

"They want to express their desire," Heller said.

Acting on the request of those she spoke with, Heller offered a motion that carried unanimously.

Heller's motion took a triangle of about seven parcels, including the Elrod property, completely off the rezoning request. Furthermore, she said those property owners that did not sign would be OK with being classified residential. By the same token, those that signed the petition — 228 of them — are granted their request to be rezoned lake residential.

Lake Keowee resident Bob Royer, who initiated the rezoning request, got 62 percent of the 371 property owners to sign the rezoning petition.

"Don't assume the other 38 percent that did not sign are opposed, Royer told the Commission, adding it was difficult to canvass an area with a large group of absentee property owners.

Royer said that since his bringing the petition to the Commission on Feb. 8, he's received six more e-mails from owners wanting to join the petition.

The Commission tabled Royer's request initially. Chairman Tommy Abbott said the planners tabled it because they felt they did not have all the information to make a decision at the time.

The petition must go back to Council for two more readings and public hearings before it is finalized.

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