

Lighthouse Restaurant dock expansion gets OK

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — The Lighthouse Restaurant on Doug Hollow Road is expanding its docking capacity on Lake Keowee.

By early spring 2016, boaters navigating the area commonly known as Mosquito Point will find that the restaurant's marina will have more than doubled the number of watercraft it can accommodate.

The expansion plans have been two years in the making, and by no means has it been easy, given the numerous state and federal hurdles needed to be cleared, Dick Cottingham, a principal with Lake Keowee Investors Inc., the group that owns the Lighthouse Restaurant, said Tuesday.

Cottingham anticipates a boost in business from boaters once they know that they won't have to circle the waters waiting for a slip to become available.

"A lot of people don't like to come to the restaurant by boat because they're afraid they won't get a space," Cottingham said. "We have boats tying up outside of boats and beaching and other things, so in a large part this will improve safety. You won't have circling out there waiting for a space."

Cottingham learned Tuesday an application filed by Duke Energy with federal regulators on behalf of the restaurant has received final approval.

Duke's application filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requested authorization

to lease an additional 0.36 acres of waters to Lake Keowee Investors to expand the existing marina at the restaurant. FERC previously approved 0.52 acres in 2010 for the existing 10-slip dock.

The installation of additional dock and mooring will allow the restaurant to accommodate 24 watercraft at the marina. According to FERC's order approving the expansion, the proposed aluminum or steel frame dock would be 120 feet long and 51 feet wide and have wooden decking and encapsulated Styrofoam flotation.

To get to the stage where FERC could approve the dock expansion, Cottingham and his group needed approval from about a dozen federal, state and local government agencies that reviewed and commented on the proposal.

Cottingham laughed and said he also needed the blessings of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, and has befriended the band's chief.

"We had to publish public notices, and we've had no pushback," Cottingham said. "We've had no objections."

Completing its fourth year, business at the Lighthouse Restaurant is going well, despite getting off to a somewhat rocky start.

Even before construc-

tion began in 2011, a group of nearby residents took Lake Keowee Investors Inc. to court in an attempt to block developers from closing a portion of Doug Hollow Road.

Residents contended that closing the road would block an access point to the lake they've enjoyed for generations. It took months, but the dispute was ultimately resolved amicably.

Cottingham remembers that friends were questioning his sanity at the time as he pushed forward with the restaurant project amid so many obstacles and a flat economy to boot.

"I had to buy multiple parcels of land, we had to move a public road, we had to get Duke to move major power lines, we had to extend the public water distribution system and to build that and turn it over to the city of Seneca," Cottingham said. "It was a chore. There was some opposition, and I remember I made the front page of your newspaper a few times."

Cottingham expects the dock expansion to be ready in time for next year's polar bear plunge fund-raising event put on by the Seneca Junior Woman's Club in March.

carlos@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6684
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The Lighthouse Restaurant on Lake Keowee has gotten approval to expand its docking capacity, allowing more room for boaters to drive up and park to enjoy a meal.

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