Residents, developer clash over plans for Lake Keowee restaurant

Investors cite $4M economic impact



FILE PHOTO

Edalene Kelley and other residents near Doug Hollow Road are opposed to a developer's plans to close public access to Lake Keowee as part of a proposal for a restaurant and bar. The developer and residents made their case before the Transportation Committee on Tuesday.

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — A handful of residents told an Oconee County Council panel that they are opposed to a developer's plans for a restaurant near Lake Keowee at Kelley Ridge Road and Doug Hollow Road, or old S.C. 183.

Long-time resident Steve Kelley, a spokesman for the residents, told members of the Transportation Committee that the developer's proposal to relocate Doug Hollow Road as part of the overall plans for the restaurant would also cut off public access to the lake.

Representing the investors, Richard Cottingham told county officials that the owners would "move forward with their plans" even without the road being relocated.

Cottingham said the restaurant and its facilities are situated in the same place on the plans with or without the road being relocated.

The restaurant would generate an economic impact of more than $4 million, Cottingham added. He said the restaurant would provide 20 full- and part-time jobs and about $20,000 in taxes.

"Clearly, we plan to be neighborhood friendly," Cottingham said. "It won't be a loud restaurant going late into the night."

Kelley was not convinced.

"Why doesn't Mr. Cottingham build a restaurant in Waterford, where he lives," Kelley said.

Waterford is a nearby lake residential community.

Kelley said the restaurant's plans include the building of a 65-foot lighthouse.

"That'll be an eyesore," Kelley said.

Committee Chairman Joel Thrift said a formal proposal of the plans should be brought to the full council.

Exiting Council Chambers, the two sides continued the debate.

Bo Knapp, a resident of the Doug Hollow Road area, said the restaurant was doomed to fail because Cottingham had not made

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a feasibility study. Knapp, himself a restaurateur, said there are not enough residents to support a restaurant.

Cottingham said he had done a feasibility study but was not about to show it to Knapp. He added that the demographics within a five- and 10-mile radius show the numbers support the restaurant.

He said plans call for summer groundbreaking.

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