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Road standoff going nowhere

Restaurant developer says he's confident of winning in court

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SENECA—There are no signs that a standoff between the Kelley family and the developer of a Lake Keowee restaurant, over the relocation of Doug Hollow Road, will be resolved any time soon outside the court.

Richard Cottingham of Lake Keowee Investors, Inc. said Monday that there's very little chance of a compromise being worked by the two sides.

"Let me just say that we have not heard from them and we have not contacted them either," Cottingham said. "We've reached out many times before without hearing back from them."

Cottingham said he feels confident waiting for a court ruling on the issue based on consultation with three attorneys.

"We're confident the declaratory judgment will be in our favor," Cottingham said.

The Oconee County Council took a step back from LKI's request to have the county take over from the SC Department of Transportation

a small section of state-controlled Doug Hollow Road.

Council voted to file for a declaratory judgment in circuit court to settle the Kelleys' claim that they have a deed that entitles them to an easement and access to the lake at the end of the road that LKI wants moved.

As of late Monday afternoon, electronic court records showed that the county has yet to file a motion.

In the meantime, Cottingham rebutted a recent article in The Journal that quoted an SC DOT spokesperson as saying that the agency had no knowledge of any plans to relocate Doug Hollow Road. The official added that no request had been received.

Cottingham said DOT is aware of the relocation plans.

Tony Shepherd, traffic-engineering director for DOT, said Monday that to his knowledge a request has not been made by the county to alter Doug Hollow Road.

Shepherd explained that the vast majority of requests for such type of road changes come from cities or counties, rather than individuals. He said if the individual makes a request to close a road it must be acted

on by a judge.

Cottingham also took exception with comments made at last week's council meeting and in other forums suggesting that Council Chairman Joel Thrift should excuse himself from the road and restaurant issue because of possible conflict of interest.

At a town hall meeting attended by council members in Fair Play last week, someone in the public asked Thrift: "What enticement have you received from Mr. Cottingham?"

"None," Thrift answered. "I don't have any dog in that fight. All we're doing is following the county policy of what to do in this situation."

Cottingham said the council chairman's brothers, Tom and Sam, are the ones in the construction business and the Thrift Brothers are not on LKI's bidding list.

"I'll just repeat what I've said in the past," Cottingham said. "This restaurant bring much-needed economic development, quality of life and a quality restaurant on the lake for the public to enjoy."

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