Sanctuary Pointe project 'still breathing'

Top state tourism official backs project after site visit

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SENECA — South Carolina's top tourism official is ready to support the ambitious Sanctuary Pointe project after recently visiting the site on Lake Hartwell near the South Carolina Welcome Center in Oconee County.

Duane Parrish, director of the state Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, toured the site with Sanctuary Pointe principal Bob Daffin, who briefed him on the project, sources told The Journal on Tuesday.

Daffin could not be reached for comment and the SCPRT communications office has not responded to multiple inquiries about the project's status.

"I know they are trying to be mum about it," a source keeping watch on the project said. "It seems when you keep quiet you make a lot more progress."



FILE PHOTO

Harbor Light Marina on the Georgia side of Lake Hartwell offers a great view of the area bordering South Carolina where a group in Seneca wants to develop a hotel/conference center and recreational complex called Sanctuary Pointe.

After visiting the site, Parrish is supporting the project. Gov. Nikki Haley also is said to be on board.

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'The project is definitely much alive,' said source

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"It's just a matter of financials," one source said. "The project is definitely much alive. It's still breathing."

The Sanctuary Pointe recreational complex, which would include hotels, conference center, golf course, restaurant and other amenities, needs the go-ahead from SCPRT.

The tourism agency would sublease the 325 acres on the Oconee side of Lake Hartwell to the developers.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages activities on Lake Hartwell, already has signed off on conceptual plans for the project.

Phil Gaines, director of S.C. State Park Service, has been involved in talks with the developers.

Gaines has said through a spokesperson that at some point in the process a public hearing would be held on the Sanctuary Pointe plans.

Oconee County is closely monitoring the Sanctuary Pointe plans because once the project gets final approval it would help accelerate Oconee's own plans to bring sewer to Interstate-85 exits that would help spur economic development.

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