Winemaker to share vision for Keowee club

Gardiner Group to hold event at Gignilliat on Tuesday

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — A nationally acclaimed winemaker is set to jet into town next week to discuss his vision for the grapes to be grown at a planned social club and public winery on Lake Keowee.

George Bursick will meet with local residents at the Gignilliat Community Center in Seneca on Tuesday night to make a presentation about the posh Equus Club & Winery and his winemaking philosophies.

The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a wine tasting and hors d'oeuvres. Executive director Russ Gardiner will speak about the project at 7 p.m.

"Then George will speak about the wines that he wants to make in the vineyards there and how we're going to go about ensuring that we make really high-quality premium wines and so forth," Gardiner said. "And then we'll have a question-and-answer period and then kind of a meet and greet for people who are interested in joining."

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Similar events are slated for Greenville on Monday and Asheville, N.C., Wednesday.

In November, Oconee County Council passed third and final reading of an ordinance to amend the county zoning map for a PDD from the Gardiner Group, headed by Greenville-based developer Gardiner.

Bursick, Equus Club's director of winemaking, who Gardiner bills as one of the top 10 winemakers in the country, is flying in from California for the presentation.

Initiation fee for members is $28,500, but the development plan is for two separate and distinct projects: the private, 500-member social club called The Equus Club at Lake Keowee, and Lake Keowee Winery, which will be open to the public.

The Equus Club would be set up as a 501 (c)(7) tax-exempt social club, while Lake Keowee Winery will include an identical winemaking facility, as well as a cooking school pavilion, cottages, outdoor amphitheater and botanical gardens.

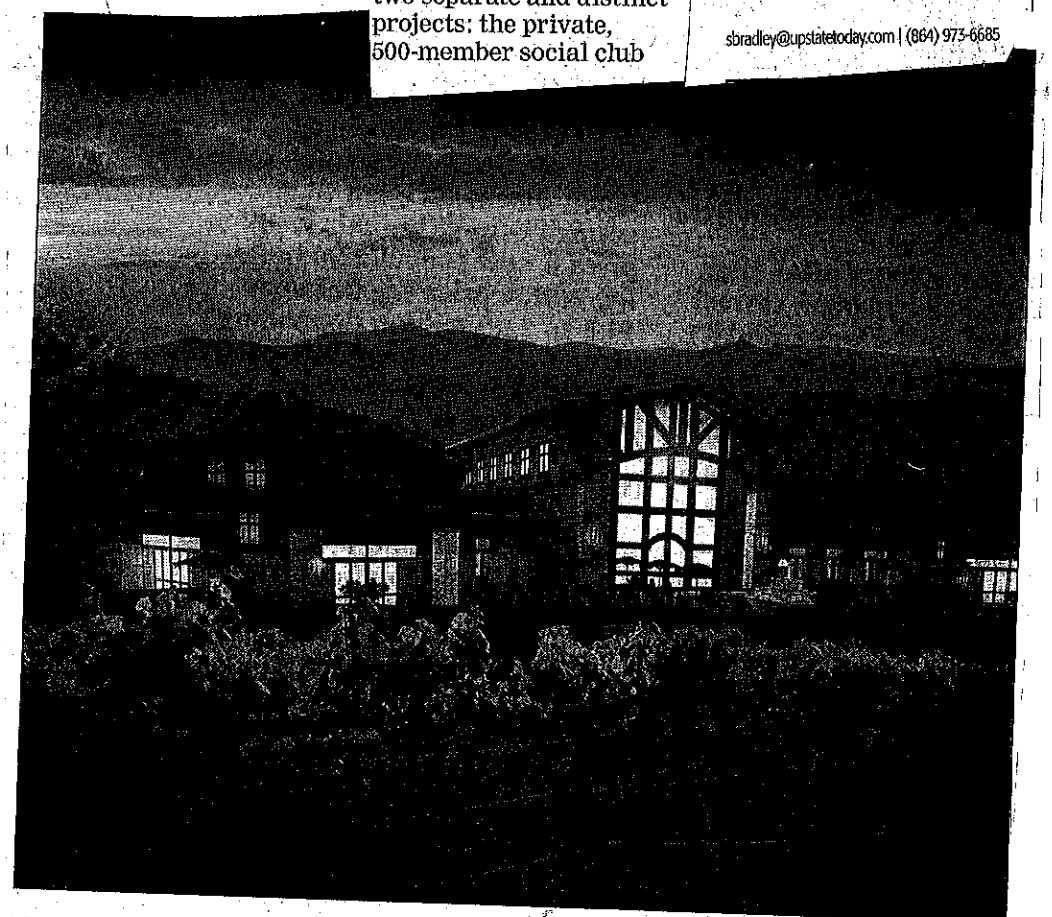
Gardiner's business plan calls for raising $14.25 million to allow the club to be fully funded with no debt through the first 500 members' initiation fees.

Gardiner told The Journal that the club has already secured almost $2.6 million in membership commitments, including members from as far away as Houston.

The development does not yet have an address — since no physical buildings exist — but once completed, there will be one address on Nimmons Bridge Road for the Lake Keowee Winery and another on East Stamp Creek Road for the Equus Club, according to Gardiner.

Those wishing to attend should RSVP to rgardiner@equusclubandwinery.com.

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SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

This artistic rendering gives an idea of what the clubhouse and vineyards could look like at the proposed Equus Club & Winery.