

YMCA to take a look at Echo Hills

Official says Y is weighing its options

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The Foothills Area Family YMCA's interest in the Echo Hills industrial site on Highway 11 is part of a review process by the organization, a Y official said Wednesday.

Anna Connelly, executive director of the Y, called the interest in Echo Hills "strictly a review" of the property to see if it meets the organization's needs.

Connelly said the Y has a facilities task force that is reviewing other properties, including the Keowee River site.

When the Keowee River Preservation Group, LLC announced plans for a 774-acre development off Highway 130 near Newry,



the developer said 8 acres would go to build a new home for the Foothills Area Family YMCA, which was to be a cornerstone of the Keowee River project.

Groundbreaking for the Y at Keowee River was originally slated for the spring of 2010 and plans are still on hold.

Connelly said Wednesday that the organization has not fully analyzed its options, including the Keowee River site.

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"The Y needs to analyze its options," Connelly said. "If we look and decide on two properties, that's an option as well."

Scott Vick, a partner in the Keowee River Preservation Group, could not be reached for comment.

The Oconee County Council unanimously voted Tuesday night to allow the Y to look at the Echo Hills site and see if a small footprint at the park is feasible.

Phil Shirley, the Oconee County Parks, Recreation and Tourism director, also sits on the YMCA's board of directors.

Council Chairman Joel Thrift said at Tuesday's council meeting that he had been approached by the Y's board of directors to indicate they were looking for alternate sites within Oconee County.

"I would like to recommend that we give them the opportunity to consider a small footprint at the park," Thrift said. "No guarantees, but in consideration of a site that would be beneficial to all Oconeans."

Connelly said the Y did not have a set acreage in mind, but that 10 to 20 acres would be ideal.

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