

# County developing plan for Fall Creek

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WALHALLA — Oconee County staff will begin work on a plan to be presented at the committee level to county council as it ponders taking over the Duke Energy-owned Fall Creek Landing and developing it into a county park.

At the direction of a council committee Tuesday evening, county administrator Scott Moulder said he and parks, recreation and tourism director Phil Shir-

ley would meet with Duke Energy officials to develop the plan.

“Obviously (Duke) would want our input on the type of improvements and use,” he said. “I don’t think Duke has a definitive use in mind. ... I think they just are glad to be able to assist with a plan. It would be nice to sit down with them to discuss how we would use the property and the goals we need to accomplish.”

The next meeting of council’s Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health and

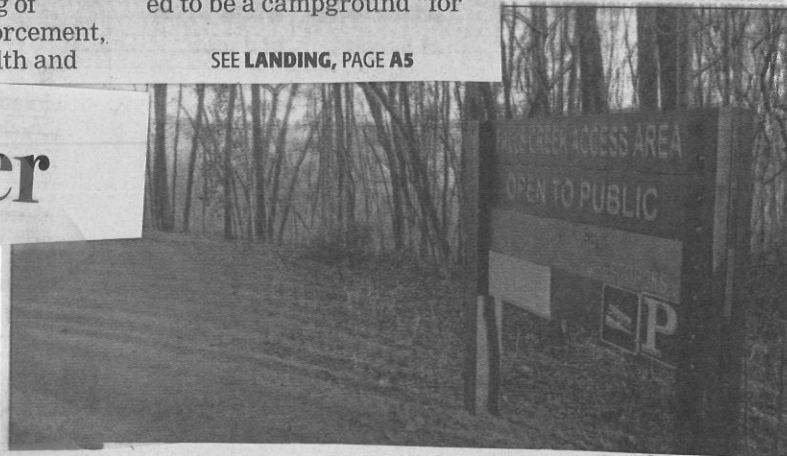
Welfare Committee is scheduled for Oct. 10.

Committee chairman Wayne McCall called the possibility of taking over Fall Creek Landing — an access area to Lake Keowee near S.C. Highway 11 in Salem — “a golden opportunity.”

McCall referenced a causeway that is closed with a gate beyond the two current access areas at Fall Creek that had been intended to be a campground “for

SEE LANDING, PAGE A5

## Landing takeover



With two separate access points and two entrances, Oconee County officials are considering converting Fall Creek Landing into a county park.

FROM PAGE A1

the general public” when the landing opened before it was eventually closed off.

“If we could take this over or make some effort to take it over, we could get that road back open (and we could have one heck of a county park up there,” McCall said.

“Our county parks are full,” he added. “The state park — Devils Fork — is full all the time. We’ve got a lot of people here — people who don’t have lake access lots, people who are just average people.”

Fall Creek Landing has two separate access points, with two entrances. Most of the boat access occurs at the north access, while most of the recreation day use takes place at the south access.

A number of increased safety measures were put in place in 2016, including putting out boulders and safety signage at the park to deter unlawful parking, and funding from Duke helped pay for overtime for deputies to have officers on-site during the summer months.

Committee member Glenn Hart agreed that county staff should make contact with Duke Energy to “see if we could get this property.”



Hart

“We can have a ranger from parks and rec, and use our road department to improve the road, and we can have campsites,” he said. “We can have another campground for the public to use, set up by the people in charge.”

Moulder said he felt confident that Duke Energy would be amenable to turning the property over to the county for a nominal fee. His concern, he said, is the upfront and ongoing financial investment it would take to open the park.

“You once told me to speak up when you start talking about projects that we have no money for,” he said to McCall. “I’m going to speak up: Where in the world are we going to get the money for this?”

“You are talking about an investment up front and over time to do

it right,” Moulder added. “If you want to expand the swimming area and parking, it would be great. All this can be done over time. I’m not talking about a \$4 million investment, but it will take time.

“If we can expand (the park) so people can have more safe access ... I think it’s worth it. I think Duke would love to work with us and lease the property.”

McCall, who has often expressed concerns that the county has catered too much to tourists without regard for its own residents, said he felt it was important that the county act swiftly.

“I’m scared we’re going to sit on it and sit on it and sit on it, and after a while it won’t happen ... and Duke Power is going to say, ‘We’re going to turn it over to somebody to make it into a swanky neighborhood,’” he said.

“The richest tourist alive didn’t elect me to office,” he added. “But that’s who I work for ... for the people in my district saying, ‘We wish we had more access for family picnics and stuff.’ We owe it to the people who put us up here to have more access.”