

Seneca officials to weigh 235-home development plan

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SENECA — With a traffic study completed, Seneca city administrator Scott Moulder said this week a proposed development to build about 235 low-maintenance patio homes on property between Keowee School and South Cove roads could return to city council's agenda later this summer.

While first reading of the proposed plan was approved in January, final approval has been held off as officials awaited the results of a study of how the development would affect traffic in the area. Moulder said the study has been completed and he and planning and

development director Ed Halbig are looking at it making recommendations to council.

John Boyd, managing partner for R&B Lake Investments LLC in Greenville, has said the company wants to put 235 homes on about 36 acres of the 91.8 acres R&B owns at the site. He said his company has assembled separate properties together for the proposed development, paying a little more than \$1.1 million for the 91.8 acres.

The developer of the property was responsible for providing the traffic study, which was then reviewed by a traffic consultant hired by the city. Moulder said the pro-

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posal could come up at a council work session July 23 "to present findings of the report," adding that any vote to approve the development would probably not appear on a council agenda before August.

"For transparency purposes, we want to get that information out there and give people time to review it and comment on it before second reading," Moulder said. "That would be a fair process."

The traffic study has been the biggest concern for members of the planning commission, city council and residents who spoke about the proposal at a meeting in January.

The Seneca Planning Commission approved a recommended rezoning of the property, which is already in the city limits, to Planned Development Residential. Halbig recommended approval of the request contingent on the developer getting the traffic analysis and complying with any requirements for traffic issues required by the

S.C. Department of Transportation.

"The plan is for no-to-low-maintenance patio homes targeting the retiree who still wants to be on the lake with a nice amenity package that doesn't necessarily want to maintain a big house and a big lot," Boyd said in December.

In the January council meeting, nine residents expressed concerns about traffic issues they believe the development could bring to South Cove Road, Keowee School Road and S.C. Highway 28.

"It would be a traffic nightmare for five to seven years, if not years beyond," said Larry Day, one of the residents attending the meeting.

Patrick Kelly said at the meeting the traffic pattern expected to be created "is beyond the possibility of being successful."

Council approved first reading of the rezoning request by a 5-1 vote at the January council meeting with the contingency for the traffic study still in place. Officials decided not to bring

the issue back to council until the completion of the traffic analysis.

Moulder said he has sent a copy of the traffic report to Oconee County administrator Amanda Brock. The issue was discussed briefly during a county council meeting earlier this year.

"We have talked and we agreed there needs to be a broader study of the whole Bountyland area, and seeing as our city limits are starting to creep out that way, I told her it would be a great opportunity for the city and the county to actually partner on a greater study area," Moulder said. "I told her we would partner and take a look at the impact."

The property for the proposed development is located behind the site of the former Covidien plant, which is now a storage business. Boyd is also an owner of the former Covidien property, which is outside the city limits, but Halbig said that building is not part of the development.

County Councilman John Elliott, who represents some of the Bountyland area, said he

has concerns about traffic with the potential new development.

"The plan is going to cause some congestion ... (Brock) is working from a county standpoint to determine what we can do to alleviate the problems that are going to occur on Keowee School Road at the entrance to South Cove," Elliott said earlier this month.

He added that the development could mean "close to 500 more cars" in the area.

"We're struggling with the traffic," he said. "With South Cove Park especially in the summer with all the tourists that are coming in, that creates a traffic problem now without adding 500 more cars."

Elliott said officials are also trying to determine if the S.C. Department of Transportation would be able to help with a project to improve traffic in the area. He said he would like to see a proposal from the developer for a second entrance to the development.