

BZA approves overlay exception for new Seneca boat dealership

BY LAUREN PIERCE
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WALHALLA — A new boat dealership is expected in the lake overlay after a special exception was granted at a recent Oconee County Board of Zoning Appeals meeting.

Ron Taffer of Bob Hill Realty, representing Amanda and Lee Levandowski from Charlotte Ski Boats in Mooresville, N.C., said the boat dealership will offer new mid-range to high-end boats and provide service for boats, too.

Located at 210 Worth St. in Seneca, the dealership would sit on two tracts of land — parcels 520-13-01-011 and 209-00-01-015 — with the latter having a portion of the tract in the lake overlay, the reason a special exception is needed for commercial use.

Board member Bill Gilster asked why the owners continued with the property knowing it would need a special exception.

“For the size of property that the Levandowskis need for their business, it’s just not available on the 123 corridor in Seneca,” Taffer explained. “This was really the only site with adequate acre-

age. So, yes, sir, we knew that we would have to come before you guys and get a special exception in hopes that we could move forward through our due diligence and get the property closed as soon as possible.”

Two people signed up to make comments on the dealership before a vote was taken.

Colleen Casella, who said she lives near the properties on Worth Street, had concerns if the developers had plans to build a road into her street and “cause a lot more traffic.”

“We have a lot of families there with children and animals, and a lot of times some people when they’re not familiar with their area, they come down really fast,” Casella said. “I wouldn’t want anybody to get hurt, and that’s a concern for me and my family as well.”

David Tate said he had the same concerns as Casella and was a next-door neighbor of hers.

“My concern is that they’re going to try to open that road up and bring traffic through that road,” he said. “I do not want to see that happen.”

Lee Levandowski said

their plans include storing about 30 boats and the business would be a “secured area” because the boats can cost “anywhere from \$150,000 to \$500,000.”

“It has to be a very secure, naturally buffered area, because the banks and the insurance company require those things from us. ... We’re going to be putting about \$1.2 million of upfits into this property with landscaping and facility modification,” he said.

“It’s a mixture, because the people buying a boat about \$500,000, they expect a certain type of facility modification to do this, that type of business.”

The board approved the special exception with two conditions — access would only be permitted to the property through U.S. Highway 123, except special deliveries through the western side of Worth Street, and an adequate barrier must be put in place to protect the nearby residential area.

‘LAME DUCK’

Jim Codner was nominated to be BZA chairman again at the meeting, but he reminded

the board there wasn’t a consensus for his renomination at a recent Oconee County Council meeting.

“Let me just say — so everyone understands — that I’m a lame duck,” Codner said. “I was nominated to be the District 1 rep. The vote taken on council was 2-2, so there was no vote for or against me. Two for me and two against. Until I am replaced formally by council, I can continue on the job, but I may be off the job here at any time. As long as you understand that, I’m very willing to.”

Board member John Eager asked Codner what he was feeling about being chair again.

“I’m glad to stay,” Codner said. “I’m glad to do it if that’s what the board wants.”

The board unanimously voted Codner for chair, with no other nominations.

“You deserve it,” said Eager, who was voted vice chair. “You’ve done a good job for us.”

Codner has been on the county’s Board of Zoning Appeals since 2018 and served as chairman at times.

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