

Announcements

May 28, 2020

Board of Zoning Appeals
Oconee County, South Carolina

Ref: Special Exception Application #SE20-01
Variance Request Application #VA20-4

My name is Gary Owens. I reside in Salem, SC, and I am the President of the Advocates for Quality Development. We are an Oconee County based not for profit, serving both Oconee County and Pickens County in South Carolina. Our mission is: **To promote quality development in Oconee County and Western Pickens County by highlighting concerns and opposing projects that threaten public safety or impair the environment, ecology, watershed or quality of life.** We represent several thousand residents in Oconee County, either as individual members or as property owners within our member HOA organizations.

In that regard, we have reviewed in detail the proposed project exceptions set before you tonight. The applicant in this case is proposing a self-storage unit project composed of seven 1 and 2 story self-storage buildings and one associated office building on this site. The majority of the buildings being proposed for this site are partially or fully within the Lake Overlay (5 of the 8 buildings). Only 3 of the 8 buildings are outside of the Lake Overlay.

The Lake Overlay District (for Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee) is outlined in Section 38-11.1 in the Oconee County Code of Ordinances. In subsection (c) the Intent states: **This overlay is intended to protect water quality, maintain natural beauty, and limit secondary impacts of new development that may negatively affect the lifestyles of those living near the lakeshore and the general enjoyment of the lakes by all citizens.**

In addition, when you review the recently approved Oconee County 10-year Comprehensive Plan, you will find the Land Use Element starting on page 11-8. Additionally, you will find Map 11-2, the Oconee County Future Land Use Map. On that map, the Comprehensive Plan has designated all of this property as "future residential", in terms of the future planned use of the property. We believe that this future Residential designation takes into consideration that current development in this area is exclusively residential. The property is directly across Highway 130 from the Keowee I, II, and III residential developments.

To our knowledge, since the passage of the Lake Overlay in 2009 in Oconee County, there has been only one exception ever granted to a developer. That exception had a very minor impact on the Lake Overlay. There was just a small tip of the excepted property that actually encroached into the Lake Overlay. The single building at the very front of the property was well outside of the Lake Overlay itself.

This request, if approved, would be the very first allowable encroachment by non-residential structures into the Lake Overlay on Lake Keowee. We believe the intent and reason that the 750' Lake Overlay was approved by the Oconee County Council in May, 2009, was to establish primarily residential developments on Lake Keowee for the future. That's why you will find such guidance in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

We strongly support keeping the Lake Overlay on Lake Keowee as protected as possible from business development, in primarily residential areas on the lake. We believe the protection of this massive lake, noted in many national travel journals as one of the most "pristine" lakes in the United States, is of paramount importance. We also recognize, as do our thousands of represented AQD members, that Lake Keowee is a significant asset to Oconee County that will only grow in the future. Future residential development on Lake Keowee will occur naturally. We encourage the Board of Zoning Appeals to continue to protect this lake from development in the Lake Overlay that does not enhance and protect the "intent" as noted so well in Chapter 38 of the Oconee County Code of Ordinances.

We also believe that the approval of these exceptions within the Lake Keowee Overlay would be precedent setting in allowing other businesses to attempt to follow their lead in the future. We, and you as BZA Commissioners, have one chance to properly protect Lake Keowee and the nearby residents within the Lake Keowee Overlay. Please help us do so.

If indeed, this kind of business is needed in Oconee County, there are all kinds of land available to build such a storage business that does not encroach on the Lake Overlay of Lake Keowee.

Therefore, we request that the special exception request #SE20-01 and the related sign variance request #VA20-4 be denied.

Respectfully,

Gary Owens
President, Advocates for Quality Development

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