



Oconee County Planning Commission

415 S. Pine Street, Walhalla, SC

29691

Telephone: 864-638-4218

Minutes

Planning Commission Meeting

January 4, 2010

The Oconee County Planning Commission held a special called meeting on January 4, 2010 at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers at the Oconee County Administrative Building, 415 S. Pine St., Walhalla, SC 29691. The purpose of the meeting was to consider and make recommendations on the Priority Capital Projects list.

Members Present: Tommy Abbott (Chairman)
Howard Moore, (Vice Chairman)
Randy Abbott
Ryan Honea
Andy Heller
Rex Ramsay

Art Holbrooks (Planning Director)
Carol Harvey (Planner)

Media Present:

Carlos Galarza, Daily Journal
Ray Chandler, Anderson Independent

Item 1: Vice-Chairman Howard Moore called the meeting to order.

Item 2: Public Comment -

Susie Cornelius – Ms. Cornelius voiced concern that Art Holbrook and Aaron Gadsby were appointed to serve on the water quality stakeholder board but that Mr. Howard Moore was already in that position. She feels that paid staff should not be serving as members of a stakeholder committee. She also expressed concern about the county spending money to build more aircraft hangars, citing the lower percentage local taxes that owners of airplanes pay compared to boat owners. She suggested that hangar rent rates be raised overall, then discounted for aircraft owners who are county residents.

Wayne McCall – Mr. McCall expressed concern about the proposed Westminster Fire/Emergency facility, citing its adjacency to small, crowded streets, suggesting that the agreements for running sirens and lights in that area may not be sufficient. He also asked the Commission to consider the fact that, in the near future, the State Legislature may require counties to hold inmates 365 days rather than the current 90 days, which would increase the County's need for the new jail, suggesting that excess funds not be spent on fire stations when the new jail may be more important.

Jerry Barnett – Mr. Barnett voiced his opposition to the use of county funds to pay for sewer and speculative buildings and also suggested that county zoning is illegal.

John Adams – Mr. Adams asked Mr. Holbrook to distribute handouts of information about the library to the Commission members. He explained that the issue of library space is determined by evaluating how various activities occupy the total square footage. He also referred the Commission members to the breakdown of the architect's figures for the total \$9 million estimated cost of a new library. Chairman Abbott asked how much land was associated with the Seneca library and if any consideration was made to enlarge that facility. Mr. Adams explained that the City of Seneca owns the land while the Library Board owns the building and that a feasibility study was conducted 3 years ago, to consider 3 options to expand it. Results of the study indicated that logistics for patronage during a construction period, as well as the inefficient shape of the library for oversight of library activities, led to the decision that expansion was not the best choice.

Item 3: Consideration and Prioritization of Capital Projects List –

1. **Mr. Rick Martin, Rock Quarry Plant Manager**, briefly explained several issues concerning the proposed expansion of the rock quarry. He answered several questions from the Commission members regarding required buffers between the quarry and adjacent properties and regarding the \$950,000 cost estimate for the front-end loader.
2. **Mr. Kevin Short, Airport Director**, conducted a short Power Point presentation on the Oconee County Airport and the location and cost of the proposed runway extension. He explained the advantages of extending the existing runway from 4400 feet to 5000 feet. Commission members asked various questions pertaining to the cost of the expansion and construction of T-hangars compared to the expected income. Mr. Short cited factors such as increased fuel sales and more traffic for more FAA funding, as well as the aircraft property taxes that go into the general fund that are not reflected in the airport balance sheet. He explained that options are also being considered for ways to get hangar rental fees to help pay construction costs of the T-hangars.
3. **Sheriff James Singleton and Steve Pruitt, Law Enforcement Center**, described how outdated much of the jail facility has been for several years and gave reasons why adding on to the existing facility is not practical. They referred to the earlier comment on the possible extended stay requirement for inmates, explaining that the State is considering two options of either 180 days or 365 days, compared to the current 90 day requirement, which will increase the overcrowding problem that exists now. Commission members asked several questions regarding earlier estimates for adding a pod to the existing structure, regarding the site selection, and regarding the option of adding floors. Questions were also raised about what will be done with the old jail and whether any 911 funds can be used for jail construction. Colonel Pruitt explained that the requested video visitation equipment is needed under the current situation, to help minimize the chances of visitors bringing in contraband. He suggested, however, that a new jail would be constructed with equipment to facilitate video visitation, which would negate the need for that separate video equipment request. Commission members asked Mr. Holbrooks to distribute copies to them of the jail study that Mr. Pruitt referred to in his remarks.

Commission members referred to the latest version of the Capital Projects List and discussed the ranking of various items. Chairman Abbott informed the group of his discussion with a representative of the Pioneer Water Authority who described their plans to building a 20 inch water line down Hwy. 59 which would provide enough water for fire protection to the proposed industrial park. Further discussion pertained to whether or not the County has existing agreements with Pioneer to allow them to supply water in that area. Questions were raised about

the need for an elevated water tank at the industrial park, as well as the need for expanding the main Solid Waste facility, and why the proposed bathhouse for High Falls Park would cost \$180,000. Questions were raised about the proposed construction (on the 10-year project list) of a southbound exit ramp at exit 1 on I-85, since there is one there already. There was consensus among the Commission members to remove the video visitation equipment, the elevated water tank, and the main solid waster facility expansion from the Capital Projects List. Suggestions were made to revise the “More Information Requested” category to prioritize those projects “as funds become available” or to create conditions for their priority levels on the list. Members agreed to move the courthouse renovation to the #2 category, as important when funds become available. Mr. Randy Abbott made a motion that Mr. Holbrooks incorporate the suggested deletions and changes to the list and forward to County Council. Mr. Honea seconded the motion, with all other members in favor.

Item 11: Mr. Honea made a motion to adjourn. Chairman Abbott adjourned the meeting.