

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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MINUTES OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Comprehensive Plan Review Subcommittee

2:00 – 4:00 PM, FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2014
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

Members Present: Mr. Gilster, Chair
Mr. Honea

Staff Present: Josh Stephens, Deputy Director of Community Development
Matthew Anspach, Planner I
Art Holbrooks, Strategic Planner

Media Present: None

1. Call to Order

Mr. Gilster called the meeting to order. 2:00 PM

2. Public Comment for Agenda and Non-Agenda Items (3 minutes)

None.

3. Initiate Review of the Comprehensive Plan

a. Staff Comments

Mr. Stephens presented that State Law requires review of the Comprehensive Plan every five years and an update every ten years. He briefly covered the structure of the current Plan.

b. Discussion & Consideration by Subcommittee

Mr. Holbrooks reiterated that the Commission is required to look at the Plan every five years and to update the Plan no later than every ten years. He added that by starting the process now, the Commission has already met their mandate even if the review and update period rolls over the ten year mandate.

Mr. Stephens added that the Commission would have to formally adopt a resolution that would go before the Council for formal adoption. He went on to give a small briefing of the original development of the Comprehensive Plan in Oconee County. He spoke on some of the progress that has been made since the last update in 2010 including projects such as Sewer South. He talked about how the Subcommittee should look to review the Plan in small portions and to include plenty of public input in the overall process.

Mr. Gilster mentioned that he spoke with the Seneca planning director Ed Halbig and discussed how the County and Seneca could try to plan together, in particular the fire districts that surround Seneca. He mentioned ways Mr. Halbig has attempted to encourage meeting attendance for Seneca public meetings in the past, such as offering free \$50 gas cards and other reward based ideas.

Mr. Holbrooks added that in the past, Plan review/updates meetings would cover a certain element at each community meeting. He mentioned that former staff would also produce surveys that were helpful for input. He stated that generating interest is a challenge.

Mr. Honea suggested that the Subcommittee develop a way to publicize what a “comp plan” is to the general public so that they would understand what the community meetings were about and their importance.

Mr. Gilster suggested staff look at plans from the cities, as well as the Strategic Plan from Council to better understand how the entities may benefit or look at the Comp Plan. He asked if the Subcommittee would like to prepare ads for radio and other media that raise awareness of the Comprehensive Plan and the community meetings.

Mr. Stephens mentioned that staff has actually been working on the Community Development website to establish “Citizen Connection” which would help the County interact with the citizens through surveys, etc.

Mr. Gilster suggested staff do both the Citizen Connection and an outreach via media.

Mr. Holbrooks spoke about past efforts in the County by staff and citizens to get the word out through various means such as the radio and clubs such as Rotary. He mentioned that fliers were handed out as well. Mr. Holbrooks talked about how many items in the current version of the Comp Plan are out of date and not relevant anymore. He also disclosed that there are items that need to be added that are relative to the projects going forward in the County now, or that will come about based on what is going on now.

Mr. Gilster proposed setting a date and a format for the first community meeting. He also asked what the format would be for one of the meetings.

Mr. Holbrooks responded in regards to format that the meetings should have a presentation; something for the public to look at. He added the meetings may have different topics depending on what area of the County the meeting is being held in. Mr.

Holbrooks mentioned that the format for the meeting may need to have some of the same information regardless of the location. He explained that having some of the same information at all of the meetings would ensure there was some consistency and in case someone missed a particular meeting, they may not miss some out on some important information. Mr. Holbrooks disclosed that the meetings are also not very confrontational because they are mainly informational and input based.

Mr. Stephens suggested another way to get input would be to personally contact people who have already had something to say about issues in the County. He added that the Subcommittee should become familiar with the document before going out and looking for input.

Mr. Honea agreed that the Subcommittee should already have a good handle on any issues that need to be addressed within the Comp Plan now so that when the community meetings begin, any suggestions by citizens could be readily understood and responded to by the Committee. He repeated that anything no longer relevant in the Comp Plan should be cleared out before moving forward.

Mr. Gilster mentioned that clearing out the outdated material in the Plan is a staff activity.

Mr. Honea agreed and pointed out that staff would come to the Subcommittee and tell them what is obsolete and no longer applicable within the Comp Plan.

Mr. Gilster asked whether staff would go through the document and make the changes.

Mr. Stephens responded that they would but that the report on the work being done would not be very specific but more like talking points.

Mr. Holbrooks stated that there were some items in the Comp Plan that not only needed to be adjusted in the goals section but that a couple of items are missing. Staff would need to take a look at what needs to be added to make each section easier to implement. He suggested this would help Council recognize that what staff does day to day is more effectively lining up with the Comp Plan goals.

Mr. Gilster said that making each section more congruent with implementation would be helpful in improving the Planning Commission's ability to be more of a planning oriented entity that worked on action items coming out of the Comp Plan; rather than simply being reactive to what comes at them. He also mentioned that he hopes to make the Plan more doable and that is currently too big and thus, less achievable.

Mr. Holbrooks added that he hopes that the improvements can be made and that the State Law does require a few categories in regards to the structure of the Comp Plan including goals, inventory of their conditions, and a time frame for completion. He did say that the language in the State Law allows for some flexibility in how the Comp Plan is done as long as it includes those categories. He talked about how action items are supposed to support implementation of the goals, but whether or not all of the action items are

accomplished is largely insignificant as long the goals are carried out. Mr. Holbrooks mentioned that staff would come up with a presentation that will get into some of the things that need to be accomplished regarding the Comp Plan. Mr. Holbrooks stated that staff would also give them something to review a few days before the next meeting so they could become familiar with the proposed actions.

Mr. Gilster asked what the different roles would be for Mr. Stephens and Mr. Holbrooks throughout the process.

Mr. Holbrooks answered that part of his own duties are still to be working on the Comp Plan and that Mr. Stephens would be working directly with the Planning Commission. He added that he does not get into the day to day work that Mr. Stephens will be involved in but that it will be a team effort.

Mr. Stephens explained that when Mr. Holbrooks moved to Administrative Services, his duties were still clearly to be a part of the Comp Plan process; largely for his institutional knowledge and experience. He added that with Mr. Holbrooks being in Administrative Services is a major help in seeing the other end of how things go from a plan to being administered.

Mr. Jim Codner gave suggestions for the Subcommittee on how to improve public input.

Mr. Gilster asked whether there was anything on the Community Development website that announced the start of the Comp Plan review/update process.

Mr. Stephens responded that there is a section that talks about the Comp Plan and that a subcommittee has been created, but that the website is essentially a work in progress. He then discussed some of the other plans for the website. He asked the Committee to look at the website and mention to staff if they had anything that they think should potentially be added to it.

Mr. Holbrooks talked about original Comp Plan from 2004. He mentioned that staff developed a survey for a random set of roughly 400 citizens that worked very well for garnering input. He added that it was important to send reminder postcards and other mechanisms to help ensure an adequate response.

Mr. Stephens requested the Subcommittee read up on the first twenty-two pages of the Comp Plan so that they could be discussed at the next meeting. He added that he would check with Ms. Hulse about the next available meeting date. He stated that Friday, May 2 would be a tentative meeting date.

4. Old Business *[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]*

None.

5. New Business *[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]*

None.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Honea motioned to adjourn.

Mr. Gilster seconded the motion. The motioned passed unanimously. 3:10 PM

Anyone wishing to submit written comments to the Planning Commission can send their comments to the Planning Department by mail or by emailing them to the email address below. Please Note: If you would like to receive a copy of the agenda via email please contact our office, or email us at: jstephens@oconeesc.com.

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