

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

Minutes

5:00 pm- Monday, June 7, 2021

Council Chambers - Oconee County Administrative Complex

Members Present

Frankie Pearson
Mike Smith
Dave Nix
Alex Vassey
Mike Johnson
Gary Gaulin
Pat Williams

Staff Present

Vivian Kompier
Laura Zimmerman

Media Present

Lauren Pierce – The Journal

1. Call to order – Mr. Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.
2. Approval of minutes 3/15/2021 – Mr. Nix moved to correct Item #10 of minutes. Minutes read “Mr. Nix abstained from voting.” Change to “Mr. Nix opposed.” Mr. Smith moved to correct Item #9 of minutes. Minutes read “Report included in backup.” Change to “Report included in backup was requested by the Planning & Economic Development Committee.” Mr. Pearson made a motion to approve the minutes with correction. Seconded by Mr. Gaulin and approved 7/0.

Mr. Smith made a motion that Mr. Williams’ review of 2021 Agriculture Strategy under item #13 on the agenda be moved under item #2 and that item #7, Planning Commission Meeting Time Discussion, follow Mr. Williams’ review.

Mr. Williams presented his review of the protection of agricultural land in Oconee County.

Planning Commission meeting time discussion/vote – Mr. Pearson made a motion to change the Planning Commission meeting start time to 6:00 PM, on a trial basis, to see if attendance improves; seconded by Mr. Williams. Discussion included concern for County employees’ work/life balance, concern for Commission members’ work/life balance, suggestion of a 5:30 start time, and skepticism that attendance will improve with a change. Mr. Pearson moved to amend his motion to a 5:30 start. Seconded by Mr. Williams and defeated 3/4. Mr. Vassey, Mr. Gaulin, Mr. Smith and Mr. Nix opposed.

3. Public comment for non-agenda items – Mr. Perry Smith from 4th District spoke on various subjects.
4. Commission member comments – Mr. Pearson gave an update on search for a Planning Director. Mr. Pearson also questioned the removal of the invocation and the pledge from the agenda. Mr. Smith thanked Planning Department staff for hard work. Mr. Smith reported that he recently presented Collision Report to the Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare and the Planning & Economic Development Committees and he made a comment on housing to the County Council regarding the pay discrepancy for the County versus statewide of about \$10,000.
5. County addresses assigned – GIS data – Commission reviewed GIS data that showed two major areas of residential growth in the County since 2016—around the lake and student housing.
6. Planning Commission member voting – Mr. Smith reported that County Attorney identified two specific conditions when a PC member should not vote on a particular issue:
 - a. When a member has a business interest in an issue being discussed
 - b. When a member is not knowledgeable about an issue being discussed
7. Planning Commission meeting time discussion/vote – see item #2 of minutes
8. July/August meeting discussion/vote – Mr. Smith made a motion that the July 8th and August 2nd Planning Commission meetings be cancelled to coincide with the County Council meeting schedule of one meeting per month during July and August; seconded by Mr. Gaulin. Discussion included opinion that Planning Commission meets independently from County Council, meeting schedule was voted on in January 2021, and resolve to tackle aggressive agenda that was set for the year. Motion was defeated 2/5, Mr. Vassey, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Pearson, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Nix opposed.
9. Coordination with Agricultural Advisory Board and other comments – Mr. Smith expressed concern that the Planning Commission is not coordinating activities and interacting effectively with other related committees. Mr. Smith asked for permission to attend Agricultural Advisory Board meeting to explore possibility of working closely with the Board to review and accomplish strategies in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Smith and Mr. Williams will attend next Agricultural Advisory Board Meeting.
10. Sewer meeting and tour comments – Mr. Gaulin reported on the tour of the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority plant he and Mr. Smith attended.
11. Exit 4/Fair Play, I-85 Overlay and collision map – Mr. Terry Jackson from Fair Play gave an update on the ongoing development at the Exit 4 I-85 interchange and the traffic issues that are being created and amplified. Planning Commission will continue to monitor progress of development.
12. Planning Commission open items – A map showing the traffic collisions on I-85 in Oconee County was shared. Impact fees and junkyard ordinance are still open items for Planning Commission action. Planning Commission will continue to study and discuss.
13. 2021 Strategies review – Status of the 5 strategies to address first that were selected from the Comprehensive Plan was discussed. Items #1 Housing (3.1.1.1, 3.1.1.4/3.1.2), #2 Entertainment and Recreation (5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.3, 7.3.1.4, 2.1.2.3), and #4 Downtown Retail (4.3.1.1, 5.3.2.3) are

complete in Planning Commission's review. Item #3 Protect Agricultural Land (8.1.1.4, 6.2.1) remains under review. Mr. Williams will continue to research. He and Mr. Smith will attend the Agricultural Advisory Board on June 14th. Item #5 Road Maintenance Planning (9.3.3.2, 9.3.2.2.) is still open to review. Road conditions remain an issue, but improvements are becoming visible as the increase in the gas tax is realized. Safety for walkers and CAT bus riders is a concern. Sidewalks could be a viable solution, but there is an ordinance that does not allow sidewalks. Mr. Smith made a motion that the Planning Department revise Chapter 26-3 to allow a developer the option of constructing sidewalks within the county right-of-way with the requirement that a surety bond be posted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Vassey. Discussions included the fear of lawsuits, student housing and safety and the need for more information from the Roads & Bridges Department and CAT Bus. Mr. Smith withdrew the motion so more information can be gathered. Representatives from Roads & Bridges Department, the CAT Bus, and the County Attorney will be invited to a future Planning Commission meeting to discuss future plans and logistics.

Commission members were asked to review the remaining strategies from the Comprehensive Plan that are to be reviewed in 2021 and be prepared to discuss at next meeting. Mr. Smith devised a system to categorize the remaining strategies so that the review process can be more efficient.

14. Mr. Smith adjourned meeting at 6:38 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 achapman@oconeesc.com.