

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



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

Minutes

5:00 pm- Monday, October 18, 2021

Council Chambers - Oconee County Administrative Complex

Members Present

Alex Vassey
Mike Smith
Pat Williams
Gary Gaulin

Mike Johnson
Frankie Pearson
David Nix

Staff Present

Vivian Kompier

Media Present

Lauren Pierce – The Journal

1. Call to order – Mr. Smith called meeting to order at 5:00 PM.
2. Invocation was led by Mr. Nix.
3. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Vassey.
4. Approval of minutes for October 4, 2021 - Mr. Pearson made a motion to approve the minutes for October 4th; seconded by Mr. Nix. Mr. Smith called for a vote; motion was approved unanimously 7/0.
5. Public comment (non-agenda items) – None
6. Commission member comments
 - a. Mr. Smith provided an update on tiny homes issue. No ordinance will be required. There will be an informational section regarding tiny homes added to the website. Mr. Smith wondered out loud why Oconee County was not part of the Greenville Pickens Area Traffic Study. Considering the Planning & Economic Development has asked the Commission to look into curb cuts and auxiliary turn lanes, this study would be a good source of information.
 - b. Mr. Gaulin attended meeting that provided information on Phase I of the City of Walhalla downtown greenway. Mr. Williams asked if the proposed plan addressed downtown traffic—it does not.
 - c. Mr. Nix stated that he also attended Walhalla Greenway meeting and is concerned about the City's prioritization of spending.

7. Staff Comments – Ms. Kompier provide a map that shows where new addresses are located in the County. Mr. Williams commented that this visual could prove helpful in getting constituents a convenience center in the Troy Valley Area.
8. Development Standards Discussion
 - a. Tony Adams, Citizen – Mr. Adams expressed his opposition to passing an ordinance that imposes government overreach. Mr. Adams questioned the financial burden the proposed standards would place on any new development projects.
 - b. Mr. Smith – read the attached email from Debbie Sewell, Chair of Oconee County Agricultural Advisory Board, into the record.
 - c. Mr. Smith started discussion with a brief background of where we are in the process of developing and adopting Development Standards.
 - d. Mr. Smith made a motion that the Planning Commission create a draft ordinance B of the development standards based on the October 4th public hearing and that this version B be further amended after the November 15th public hearing. Mr. Gaulin seconded the motion. Discussion included, but was not limited to, clarification of the action required by the Commission if the motion is passed, practicality of amending after the November 15th public hearing, and the process of the Commission reporting to County Council. Mr. Smith called for a vote. The motion passed 5/2, with Mr. Pearson and Mr. Nix opposing.
 - e. Discussion to create draft B, section by section, was held. Discussion included, but was not limited to, the following points:
 - i. Definition and use of the word subdivision
 - ii. Addition or subtraction of the word “new” before the word development(s) in the opening paragraph
 - iii. Mr. Smith called for a vote on accepting the first paragraph as it was rewritten; accepted 5/2 with Mr. Pearson and Mr. Nix opposing.
 - iv. No changes were made to the applicability section of the original document.
 - v. No changes were made to the second paragraph of the original document.
 - vi. Addition of definitions. Screening and buffering definitions were taken from other ordinances and the lighting definition was newly created.
 - vii. Discussion on the role of the Board of Zoning Appeals if adjacent property owners mutually agree that the screening and buffering provision is not needed. Proposal to change language in ordinance to: “The buffer and screening requirements may be waived or modified between adjacent property owners through a written, recorded document agreement.” A vote found Commission members unanimously agree the language should be changed as above.
 - viii. Critique of the definition of lighting.
 - ix. Mr. Nix made a motion to take a 5-minute break. Mr. Smith called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.
 - x. Mr. Smith called the meeting back to order.
 - xi. Discussion on the definition of the term “objectionable lighting.” Mr. Nix will email definition he found to Ms. Kompier. Ms. Kompier will research and propose a definition to the Commission.
 - xii. Discussion moved to Section 2. Lighting – Commission members reviewed Appendix A in Chapter 38 of the Code of Ordinances as a possible reference addition to the Development Standards. Members discussed the opinion that there is too much room for interpretation of the appendix by the Planning Director. Mr. Smith called for a vote to change the word “may” in the highlighted sentence in the Lighting Section of the backup document to “shall.” Vote was 4/3 with Mr. Vassey, Mr. Johnson, and Mr.

Nix opposing. Mr. Gaulin suggested that two precise sentences would make the highlighted sentence better. A period would go after “appendix A” and the next sentence would start with “A light plan...” and change “may” to “shall.” Mr. Smith called for a vote and the new revision was approved 7/0.

- xiii. Discussion on Section 3 Screening and Buffering. Suggestion was made to substitute the words “improved area” for development in the first sentence. Mr. Smith called for a vote on the change; the vote was 7/0. The definition of the term “drive lanes” was discussed. The use of the term “other business activities” was discussed. The use of the word “evergreen” was discussed and Commission agreed to strike evergreen where highlighted. Discussion on the minimum buffer size; decided not to change and have public weigh-in during the public hearing. Discussed the use of the term “paved sidewalks,” specifically “paved.” Discussion on exemptions. It was noted that SCDHEC approved uses in the buffer were deleted from the document.
- xiv. Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve draft ordinance B with requested changes. Mr. Gaulin seconded the motion. Discussion produced a more appropriate motion. Mr. Johnson made a motion to direct staff to make requested changes to draft ordinance B to be reviewed and discussed at the next scheduled Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 7/0.

- 9. Adjourn – Mr. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. Mr. Smith called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously 7/0 at 7:15 PM.

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Non-Agenda Item Public Comment Sign-Up

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Development Standards discussion Public Comment Sign-Up

1. Tony Adams
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Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend tonight's meeting. I had a fall Friday and broke my patella. I am on doctors' orders to keep it stabilized and to stay put until it can be repaired. I will be watching on YouTube.

I want to emphasize **The Agriculture Advisory Board Supports Ordinance 2021-19 establishing Development Standards related to Lighting, screening, and buffering on new non-residential, multifamily, and mixed-use development.**

We took the opportunity to discuss these standards at our last meeting. We made suggestions to strengthen and clarify the ordinance and document 'b'. We appreciate your willingness to consider our suggestions.

Lighting:

Light Standards in this Ordinance address artificial light and light pollution, when followed these standards would lessen the negative effects of lighting in New Developments on existing agriculture, forestland, and residential

Mitigating artificial light and light pollution by making appropriate lighting choices, shielding lights properly, and using lighting only where it is needed improves the health of the ecosystem, protects the view of the night-sky, and saves resources.

These standards need to **Be clear and concise in this ordinance.**

Screening and buffering:

Screening and Buffering Standards in this Ordinance address the critical spaces between, and the effects new Development has on neighboring agriculture, forest, and residential properties.

screening and buffers have profound benefits to both the existing property and the new development. They improve the environmental health, aesthetics, and enjoyment of both. Typically, higher property values are realized on both unique properties.

Screening requirements for the most part are sufficiently described in the existing document. The AAB did suggest a few changes in landscape recommendations. .

Buffering requirements outlined are minimal when compared to neighboring and other counties in SC, NC, and GA.

We support these requirements as a minimum.

The approval of these standards meets several of the goals outlined in the Agriculture Elements of the Oconee County

Comprehensive Plan and the Ordinance exempts Agricultural and Forestry uses and activities from these standards as defined by the SC Right to Farm Act. The Agricultural Advisory Board supports these proposed Development Standards and will advise County Council to approve Ordinance 2021-19.

Thank you for your consideration,

Debbie Sewell,

Agricultural Advisory Board

Respectfully,

Debbie Sewell

Sent from my iPhone