

# Cane Creek passes; referendum

Council intent on getting public funding for sewer

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WALHALLA — Oconee County officials finally put behind them the contentious and controversial Cane Creek rezoning petition by giving more than 900 lakeside homeowners everything they asked for.

By a 4-1 vote, County Council approved Tuesday night the

rezoning request that they've been mulling over for more than five months.

After turning that zoning page, council embarked in a new direction in an effort to get sewer projects off the dime in unincorporated areas.

Council formally requested of County Administrator Scott Moulder to bring them a resolution that would ask taxpayers,

through a referendum, to fund expansion and operation of sewer.

Councilman Reg Dexter, who initiated the discussion and vote for the referendum, said he envisions a property tax for sewer that would impact residents in unincorporated areas as is currently done with the 2.9 mills used for fire prevention services.

Dexter said residents in the municipalities would not be asked to pay to avoid double taxation.

## CANE CREEK

The final vote on Cane Creek petition packed Council Chambers.

Councilman Wayne McCall alone voted against approval. McCall wanted it tabled until a proposal by Planning Commission Chairman Ryan Honea is discussed and acted on. Honea's recommendation would not allow property owners having 1/2 acres or more to be dragged

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into small-area rezoning, as Cane Creek did with various property owners on South Cove Road who asked to be zoned Traditional Rural District. Those property owners ended up with Agricultural Residential District — a classification they did not want.

Councilman Paul Corbeil argued in favor of approving the petition as recommended by the Planning Commission

and staff.

He said property owners who disapprove still have the option of asking for a variance to what was adopted.

Councilman Archie Barron sided with Corbeil, adding that he met with South Cove property owners to see the situation first hand.

"I cannot in my mind see (those properties) fit any other classification than Agricultural Residential," Barron said.

Lilly Davis became the

leading voice of those who opposed the Cane Creek petition. Davis said she and others first requested TRD two years ago before council created Agricultural Residential.

"How can they impose Ag Res on us when it didn't exist then ... I think there'll be more things to come," said Davis, who has previously expressed the possibility of taking legal action. "It doesn't seem to matter what the people want."

## REFERENDUM

Dexter said the referendum would be strictly for the purpose of getting sewer to the Golden Corner Commerce Park and Echo Hills — two properties designated for industrial development.

"We don't have any business going into a place that has no infrastructure," he said. "That's needed and the end result is companies coming and creating jobs."

Moulder said the whole process could be initiated

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with the approval of a resolution by council. He said that would allow an ordinance to be established and approved with the referendum question on the ballot.

The state Voter Registration and Election Commission would have to approve the question before it could be submitted to the Department of Justice.

"All this would need to be done and submitted by Aug. 15," Moulder said.

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