

Clock strikes midnight for expiring seats on Planning Commission

By CARLOS GALARZA
carlos@dailyjm.com

WALHALLA — Odd things tend to occur on the first day of April. It is, after all, traditionally a day to have a laugh at someone else's expense.

Oconee County was not without its oddities Wednesday.

The terms of six of the seven Planning Commission members officially expired, but county officials assure everyone the rare occurrence was not meant to be a joke.

Planning Department Director Art Holbrooks said that over the past few years, because Oconee County Council appointments and reap-

pointments have not always been made in timely manner, the once staggered terms have all come due to expire on the same day.

Although he admits it caught most everyone by surprise, Holbrooks assures there'll be "no pending crisis." When the Planning Commission meets again April 9, Chairman Tommy Abbott, whose term is the only one not due to expire, will not be sitting on the dais alone.

In fact, only two seats will be empty when the Commission convenes April 9.

Holbrooks said District 1 Commissioner Bill Nelson, who represents the Salem area, made his resignation official last week

and does not want to be considered for reappointment.

District 3 Commissioner Bill Evatt publicly announced his resignation during a meeting last week. Evatt said he was stepping down because he did not like the tone of the debate related to zoning and the Lake Overlay District.

Holbrooks said the other commissioners whose terms have expired, including Randy Abbott of District 2 and at-

large members Howard Moore and Rex Ramsay, would remain on the job until they are either reappointed or replaced by County Council.

Commission Vice Chairman Ryan Honea, of District 5, was reappointed earlier this month before his term expired.

Everybody agrees that the thing to do now is to find a fair way of staggering the terms again without putting any district at a disadvantage.