

Comprehensive plan revamp to begin in Oconee

Planners to tackle parts of measure until complete

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WALHALLA — Starting next month, county planners will begin taking an in-depth look at managing population growth and improving transportation efficiency as part of the state-mandated update of Oconee County's Comprehensive Plan.

Every five years, counties are required to review and update their comprehensive plan, which is used as a master guide for future growth. State law requires the plan be rewritten every 10 years.

After adopting a comprehensive plan in 2004, Oconee must complete a review of its plan by the end of 2009.

The Planning Commission agreed Monday night to delve into its review of the comprehensive plan at its next meeting in February.

Population and transportation are two of nine areas, or elements, of the comprehensive plan that commission members will tackle.

Planning Department Director Art Holbrooks said his staff will rely on the latest U.S. Census Bureau data available in crafting the population element of the comprehensive plan, which will be adopted by the Oconee County Council before the Census 2010 data is released.

According to Holbrooks, a review of the population element would include:

- Analyzing historic trends;
- Estimating household numbers;
- Adding specific actions necessary to manage population change; and
- Considering the effects of continued growth since adoption of the 2004 plan.

Transportation is a totally new element not addressed in the current comprehensive plan. An outline to be presented to planning commissioners in February would include identifying transportation facilities, major road improvements, new road construction, pedestrian and bicycle lane projects and ensuring transportation efficiency for existing and planned developments.

Holbrooks told commissioners the plan would be to look at one or two elements each month until a final draft is prepared for County Council to review by the summer.

The other elements that make up the comprehensive plan are housing, land use, community facilities, cultural resources, natural resources, economic development and priority investment, which also is new in the revised plan.

Holbrooks said a stakeholders' meeting would be held each month to get input on elements being reviewed.

A complete list and description of the comprehensive plan's elements are available at <http://www.oconeesc.com/planning/comprehensiveplan.htm>.