Conflicting zoning plans move forward

Oconee County planners tell staff to combine maps

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WALHALLA — Oconee County planners have sent two conflicting rezoning petitions on to County Council even as several of them agreed the council will probably fire both petitions right back.

By a 4-2 vote, Planning Commission members approved the predominately traditional rural North Fairview rezoning. Then, on a 6-0 vote, they agreed to the North Cane Creek petition, which seeks mostly lake and lakefront residential protection, with the understanding that planning staff will combine the zoning maps of the two petitions into one.

The commission's action ignored a recommendation from Planning Director Art Holbrooks, who presented a "compromise" map combining the two petitions. His suggestion called for rezoning significant portions of the Fairview request as "ag residential," a new classification planners have recommended council adopt.

However, Jean Jennings and David Mcmahan, principles in the North Fairview petition, told planners they still wanted to be zoned traditional rural.

"We want to be left alone and live in peace," Jennings told planners. "We didn't bother lakefront property owners even though some parcels touch the lake."

Jim Codner, spokesman for the North Cane Creek petition, told planners that only seven parcels, or three percent of the 254 in his petition, are in question. He argued that the new ag residential classification is actually more restrictive than traditional rural and would afford people who wanted to retain their rural lifestyle even greater protection.

At least three Planning Commission members — Howard Moore,

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Randy Abbott and Chairman Tommy Abbot — expressed concerns about changing a zoning request without giving petitioners time to consider the change. Both the chairman and Moore suggested delaying the vote.

"These people chose this (traditional rural) out of what was available," Moore said. "It may work. I think they may like it, but we don't know, and we can't move forward in good conscience."

However, commission member Ryan Honea, pushed planners to resolve the issue of overlapping parcels in the two petitions.

"I can see a compromise here," he said. "Everyone can come away a little happy."

Earlier, Honea said that it is up to the commission to resolve conflicts.

"Eventually, we have to tackle this elephant (of conflicting parcels) and shoot it," he said.

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