County Council, planners on a collision course

Planning Commission to table officials' new rezoning requests

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THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The Oconee County Council and Planning Commission appear to be headed on a collision course.

Commission Chairman Tommy Abbott said Wednesday that two rezoning petition requests forwarded to planners by the County Council with instructions to reply in 30 days would be tabled.

Abbott said it would not make sense to rush through the rezoning petitions after the Commission last week voted to place a moratorium on considering new zoning requests.

When the Commission meets in a regular meeting Monday, Abbott said the seven-member group would begin the process of bringing up their individual concerns with the implementation of the county's Zoning Enabling Ordinance (ZEO) that took effect May 1, 2009.

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Howard Moore
Planning Commission
vice chairman

"If addressing our concerns with the ZEO takes 30 days or 60 days, I don't know," Abbott said. "I don't see the sense of rushing through (the petitions) without recommending changes."

Commission Vice Chairman Howard

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Moore said Wednesday that he has two pages listing his concerns with the ZEO. He said other planners have their own concerns and all of them would be aired at Monday's meeting.

"Unless we get things cleared up now, it's going to be a nightmare," Moore said. "Unless we correct some of these things, council could be tied up with zoning the rest of the year and not get anything else done."

Council Chairman Reg Dexter was recently asked about the commission's moratorium and whether the council would take under consideration planners' recommendations.

"I don't know; it depends on what the recommendations are," Dexter said.

Some of the commission's concerns have been prompted by calls from property owners that get broadsided by rezoning petition letters.

Moore said other landowners simply throw rezoning petitions away thinking that if they don't sign up they'll be left alone.

"People need to know that if they don't respond it sends the message that they're OK with the request," he said. "There's just a lot of confusion out there."

Abbott said he expects the new rezoning requests to be on the agenda Monday.

"We'll receive it and give it consideration for information only," Abbott said. "It'll come under the moratorium and (the petitions) will be on our to do list once the moratorium is lifted."

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