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FOLKS supports lake overlay plan

Staff Reports

SENECA — It probably comes as no surprise to anyone that the Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS) has come out in support of a plan to proceed with a zoning enabling ordinance that contains a lake overlay.

Last week, council members agreed to hold an April 15 public hearing and second reading of the zoning ordinance it first introduced last fall.

That ordinance, reviewed by the Planning Commission and returned to the council virtually unchanged, calls for overlays to protect lake frontage from high-density development.

It also contained an overlay for an industrial area with low density residential and a scenic highway overlay. It is unclear whether the latter two overlays will be included on second reading.

"We do not believe that South Carolina Law will allow Oconee County to go on indefinitely without passing an ordinance.

The Comprehensive Plan discusses the critical nature of protecting our lakes and watersheds and points to consideration of Community-wide zoning in 2007," said Bill Graham, FOLKS president.

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— Bill Graham, FOLKS president

sure view, we are probably fortunate to be in an economic slump but that will pass and if we do not have lake-protective measures in place, we will continue to have 'development by default' in Oconee County," he continued. "The economic and quality of life future of the County is too important for that to happen."

FOLKS Executive Director Ben Turetzky said that implementation of community-based zoning is a reasonable path to take and, as proposed, would not force zoning on any district in which a majority of registered voters do not want zoning.

Graham pointed to Anderson County where Community-based zoning has been in effect since 1999.

"Their enabling ordinance is based on election districts and they have 70 of them. After an initial flurry of petitions there

have been 18 petitions that resulted in a vote and 17 of them passed," Graham said.

FOLKS' public support of the overlay process comes just two days after an opponent of zoning announced he had formulated an Internet petition drive against zoning.

Those signatures are expected to be presented to County Council at its April 15 hearing on the plan, according to Jerry Barnett, who said he represents a "circle of friends" operating under the name "We the People of Oconee County."



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