Farming family receives rezoning

Planning Commission backs Mathis family petition

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — A family known for taking good care of their land cleared an important hurdle to getting their property rezoned into the Traditional Rural District.

The Mathis family received unanimous backing from the Oconee County Planning Commission for their rezoning request Monday night, despite an attempt to get a chunk of the Mathis land that abuts Lake Keowee to be classified in the more restrictive Agricultural Residential District.

In the end, the Mathises reputation as great stewards of the land, and their standing in the community, won the support of the commissioners.

Commissioner David Lyle said he could not justify voting for anything other than the Mathis petition.

"I know the Mathises take care of everything they touch," he said.

Lyle and Commission Vice Chairman Howard Moore agreed that any concerns from lake residents about the future use of the Mathis property closest to Lake Keowee should be put to rest by the Lake Overlay.

The Lake Overlay in Oconee's Zoning Enabling Ordinance has building restrictions on property within its boundary that is measured 750 feet from full pond.

Commission Chairman Ryan Honea also endorsed the Mathis petition.

"These are people that made Oconee County," Honea said.

However, Jim Codner, representing the second part of a Cane Creek petition that will be coming before the commission, argued that commissioners

support

should apply the county's Future Land Use Map, which he characterized as the Bible for zoning.

"We recognize the Mathises have been here a long time and that they've been wonderful stewards... that goes without saying," Codner said.

However, Codner told commissioners that they should "look at the overall picture as opposed to individuals."

Commissioner Tommy Abbott took Codner to task.

"I've known the Mathis family 40 years," Abbott said. "I think everything Jim Codner had to say is a bunch of hogwash."

Commissioners said they would be inclined to look at strengthening the Lake Overlay District.

Commissioner Andrea Heller, who was unsuccessful in getting commercial restrictions added to the Lake Overlay earlier this year, said she would hold commissioners' feet to the fire on strengthening the overlay.

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685