Oconee braces for zoning requests

7 petitions to go before County Council Sept. 6

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WALHALLA — The head of the Oconee County Planning Commission is not worried about managing a rash of rezoning petitions coming down the pike at the same time next month.

Seven zoning requests are to go before Oconee County Council for a first vote on Sept. 6. If approved, the petitions would then be brought to the Planning Commission for its review.

Commission Chairman Ryan Honea said Tuesday that council is giving planners some flexibility in dealing with the seven petitions.

Honea said he has no intention of trying to squeeze more than two petitions in any given meeting. The earliest the commission could meet to see any of the petitions would be at its regular meeting Sept. 19.

While that might be a little slow to suit some, Honea said the petitions are at least being processed instead of "sitting in a drawer in the Planning Department."

Honea said he wants to avoid long meetings trying to do too much at once. He would like to see the public have the opportunity to comment on any of the petitions with as little confusion and aggravation as possible.

"The more aggravated you become, the more prone you are to make a mistake," Honea said.

Planning Department staff posted an agenda item summary on each of the petitions along with a map showing what is being requested.

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One of the petitions is the Cane Creek rezoning request submitted by Jim Codner.

It consists of 1,094 parcels totaling some 1,250 acres (mostly waterfront residential properties) in the area of Cane Creek and Lake Keowee.

Codner's name is associated with an earlier petition dominated by lake residential properties from Cane Creek that bumped up against another petition brought by North Fairview property owners that sought Traditional Rural status.

In a controversial decision, council went against a Planning Commission recommendation to grant Jean Jennings and the McMahan family their Traditional Rural request, and instead gave them a newly created and more restrictive Agricultural Residential designation.

Jennings and the McMahans have accused Codner, president of Advocates for Quality Development Inc., of working too closely with Councilman Paul Corbeil and others to influence council's decision.

Codner, Corbeil and AQD deny there was collusion.

This time, Codner's petition again bumps up against properties contained in separate petitions that are requesting Traditional Rural, which is the least restrictive of all rezoning categories.

Jess Neville submitted one of the bumping requests, while George Mathis and his wife submitted the other.

While most of the property in both petitions is rural, some of it is located in the residential and rural suburban areas on the Future Land Use Map.

Honea said the other four rezoning petitions — Moonlight Bay on Lake Hartwell, the Southern Hartwell request, McClure and N. Return Church Road request and Willow Lane petition — are "cut and dried."

There are still more than a dozen rezoning requests being prepared by property owners that are not yet ready to go before council for first reading, planning officials said.

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