Oconee building permits booming

PERMITS: Up 69% since 2014

Officials offer updates on projects around the county

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WALHALLA — New home permits in Oconee County are up 76 percent from the first six months of this year compared to the same span two years ago, and total building permits aren't far off that pace.

Deputy director of community development Josh Stephens said this week his office has issued 199 new home permits between Jan. 1 and Tuesday, when he presented the information to county council's planning and economic development committee.

There were 134 new home permits issued in the same span last year and 113 during that period in 2014. The county has processed 1,248 total building permits thus far this year compared to 994 in 2015 and 737 in 2014 — a 69 percent increase over that two-year span.

"We've seen a lot of growth on the residential front with projects like Pointe West continuing to develop homes, so there was a big increase in subdivision development," Stephens said.

The county also has a "pretty good pipeline" for subdivision projects, according to Stephens, who pointed to three subdivisions called Harbor Pointe, Nine Points and Sunset Island, which he said were "on the horizon."

"We've had contact with those developers to look at some basic concepts; we're beginning to work with them and getting them set up to go through the process of a formal subdivision review," Stephens said.

Harbor Pointe would be located off Stamp Creek Road in Salem. Crescent Land and Timber Corp. owns the 1,070-acre parcel.

Nine Points and Sunset Island would be along Waterfall Road near High Falls County Park in Seneca. The Nine Points parcel is 11 acres also owned by Crescent, while Sunset Island would be on a 39-acre parcel owned by TT Acquisitions LLC of Knoxville, Tenn.

Further along in the process, a preliminary plan review is underway for Timber Bay, a project that has dealt with access issues along Vickery Road near Keowee School Road.

"We've been working with them continually," Stephens said, "and we think they have a solution. They're going to essentially come in off Crooked Creek and just kind of forgo Vickery."

Stephens said the county has one subdivision already under construction, Highland Shores — formerly known as Highlands of Keowee — off Nimmons Bridge Road in Salem.

On the community development front, Stephens said Richard Blackwell's team at the Oconee Economic Alliance has kept his office busy with "a lot of big projects," pointing specifically to Baxter Enterprises and Hi-Tech Mold & Engineering, which have begun construction of a new 87,000-square- foot facility within the Oconee Industry and Technology Park off S.C. Highway 11.

"We've been working with Baxter and helping those guys go vertical and get started out there on that site," Stephens said, "and we're working with them very closely as they go through that permitting and construction process and inspections."

Stephens said county staff is also "getting ready" for the Hartwell Village project — a lakefront retail and restaurant development near Clemson that expects to open in early 2017 — as the NewSpring Church project at the same location enters its "final phase."

"They are shooting (to be open) by the first of the school year," Stephens said of the church.

Blackwell had provided an update on Hartwell Village earlier in the meeting.

"(Developer Casto Southeast Realty Services) have taken a little bit of time off, so to speak," he said, "but they'll be back out there in the next few weeks to months, moving that dirt and getting ready for the 300,000-350,000 square feet of retail."

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