Oconee receives extension to answer zoning lawsuit

State Insurance Reserve Fund retains attorney for county

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THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County is getting a 30-day extension to respond to a zoning lawsuit filed last month.

James D. Jolly Jr. filed a letter this week at the Oconee County Courthouse acknowledging that he had been granted an extension until Oct. 4 to answer the lawsuit filed by Jean Jennings and David and Michelle McMahan.

Roberta Barton, who is representing Jennings and the McMahans, agreed to the extension.

Jolly states in the letter that the law firm of Logan, Jolly & Smith of Anderson was retained by the South Carolina Insurance Reserve Fund to represent Oconee, County Administrator Scott Moulder and possibly some of the other county defendants.

Other county officials named in the lawsuit are Councilmen Paul Corbeil and Reg Dexter, Planning Director Art Holbrooks and Planning Commission member Andrea Heller.

The lawsuit also names Advocates for Quality Development Inc., AQD President Jim Codner, Gary Owens and Chuck Smith as defendants.

In the letter addressed to Barton, Jolly said: "You graciously agreed to grant a 30-day extension of the time in which to serve response pleadings and/or appropriate motions on behalf of all defendants."

The lawsuit claims, among other things, that county officials partook in a civil conspiracy when they privately discussed zoning issues with AQD members in emails that likely swayed council's decision to deny Jennings and the McMahans' rezoning petition.

County Attorney Tom Martin of the McNair Law Firm, although not a defendant, will not represent the county because his name appears in the lawsuit as having participated in the zoning talks.

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