

# Packed house sounds

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WALHALLA — Many among a standing-room-only audience at the Oconee County Council meeting Tuesday night had just one thing on their mind: zoning.

One after another, residents took advantage of extended four-minute public comment sessions to make their feelings known

about overlays to protect area lakes or whether residents initiating land-use regulations in one part of the county should bear the costs related to the action.

The large crowd was expected after the new majority on the council officially made it known during a workshop last week it wanted to revisit the Zoning Enabling Ordinance approved in October.

Councilman George Blanchard, who spearheaded the move to adopt a ZEO for the county in 2007, appealed to the majority not to go forward with another review after almost two years of effort in getting an ordinance approved.

"I don't know what else you need in terms of citizen involvement," Blanchard said, referring to the outpouring of petitions to pro-

tect lakes Keowee and Jocassee from unchecked development.

Blanchard added it would be "divisive" to introduce any proposal requiring residents to pay for zoning.

Calmly and reflectively, Council Chairman Reg Dexter reminded everyone there would be no overhaul of the ZEO and that the principle intent of revisiting the ordinance was to make

## off on zoning

sure the document complies with state law.

"The ZEO is not being changed..." Dexter said. "There's no recreating the wheel, just looking at some things that need to be clarified."

With that said, the new majority on the council approved the first reading of an ordinance to amend the ZEO "in certain limited regards." Blanchard

voted against it. Dexter, Wayne McCall and Joel Thrift approved. Councilman Mario Suarez was not present at the meeting.

Once approved, the ZEO would be sent back to the Planning Commission for review. The majority of Planning Commission members have in the past spoken out against the lake overlays.

The ZEO goes into effect May 1.