Pickens plans for future

Transportation, housing, land use among areas covered in document

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A group formed to help develop a long-range plan for Pickens County met Tuesday night to work on reaching a consensus on goals and objectives for the plan that touches on areas from economic development to natural resources.

The comprehensive plan is designed to lay out goals for Pickens County by 2030 — how the county will look and what it will include, according to Chris Brink, community development director for the county.

At the meeting Tuesday night, which was to be the advisory committee's final meeting, more than 40 people gathered. At times, people raised their voices and talked over each other, disagreeing about whether the 2030 Pickens County comprehensive plan is necessary and what impact it will have.

Brink said the state requires the county to formulate a comprehensive plan every 10 years and update the plan every five years.

He said it also mandates that nine elements be covered in the plan: economic development, community facilities, cultural resources, natural resources, transportation, housing, population, land use and priority investment.

Leanne White, a Pickens County resident, said during a break at the meeting that she is concerned about the plan.

"It steps over our constitutional property rights, and it will destroy our freedom to grow and develop as a county," she said.

White said that if people are over-regulated, they won't be able to do what is needed to develop.

shaping up

Dennis Chastain, an advisory committee member, said during another break at the meeting that, "If Pickens County does not take affirmative action to determine its own destiny, we will by default become a bedroom community of Greenville. ... We're at a crossroads in Pickens County."

Nathalie Schmidt, a county planner, said the draft plan includes long-term goals such as the possible implementation, if feasible, of a public transportation system that would connect municipal areas of the county, colleges and neighboring county centers, as well as efforts to encourage economic and tourism development.

There will be at least two more public hearings, according to Brink.

He said the comprehensive plan has a "wiki" site, http://2030pickenscounty.editme.com, where people can still make comments.