Planners seek $5 zoning fee

Commission recommends ZOE changes to Oconee County Council

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WALHALLA — The Planning Commission approved substantial changes to Oconee's zoning law Monday night, including the addition of a $5 per parcel fee for all future citizen-initiated petitions.

By a split vote, planners recommended their changes to the Zoning Enabling Ordinance to the Oconee County Council, which can accept or reject any or all of the recommendations.

Other changes hammered out at Monday night's meeting include:

- Having the commission approve the boundaries of any citizen-initiated request to avoid overlapping petitions and other problems.
- Requiring petitions to have at least 65 percent of landowners of 65 percent of the landmass for the rezoning request to be processed. Currently, 51 percent of the landowners are needed.
- Sending notices in clearly marked envelopes indicating to property owners they should open it and read it carefully.
- Mailing out rezoning notices by certified mail.

To help pay for the cost of sending out notices by certified mail, the commission voted to establish a flat fee of $5 per parcel.

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>
> **Tommy Abbott,** Planning Commission chairman

SEE ZONING, PAGE A5

ZONING: Moratorium tossed out

FROM PAGE A1

Planning Director Art Holbrooks told the commission that his department has spent more than $4,000 processing petitions so far this fiscal year. Those costs would spike by sending notices by certified mail, which costs about $6.

Planners also recommended the addition of an Agricultural Residential District and a Public Recreation Land District.

The commission voted to eliminate a moratorium while it considers changes to the ZEO and will review two pending petitions.

At the end of the meeting, Commission Chairman Tommy Abbott lashed out at critics questioning his motives for changes. "You have seven people sitting here making about 50 cents an hour that have the best interest of the people of Oconee County at heart."

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