

Planners to review zoning changes

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WALHALLA — Either out of respect for and deference to their advisers on planning issues, or as punishment, as others suggest in jest, the Oconee County Council has returned a final draft of an ordinance amending the county's first Zoning Enabling Ordinance (ZEO) to the Planning Commission for its review at a special meeting today.

County Planner Aaron Gadsby said Wednesday he expects the Planning Commission to make a quick review and approve the document.

Council members want the commission to take one last look at the ordinance before the document comes back to them for a third reading and final reading at their next regular meeting Tuesday night.

During public hearings last week on the final changes proposed for the ZEO, the majority of the public, mostly lake residents, applauded council and the commission for moving ahead with a formula that allows for land-use regulations and delineates a Lake Overlay District to protect lakes Keowee and Jocassee from unchecked development.

Steve MacLeod, president of the Mountain Lakes Community Association, attended the public hearing and said it is a milestone accomplishment.

"This is truly an historic event in the life of our county and will be looked



Heller

upon as a key component in the effort to preserve and protect the rich heritage, friendly lifestyle and beautiful environment we enjoy," he said.

Gary Owens, president of Advocates for Quality Development (AQD), said AQD stands committed to the long-range protection of the lakes.

Zoning was not without its detractors at the public hearing.

"I've paid my taxes since 1959, but I have no voice in the Lake Overlay," resident John Little said.

Jerry Barnett was critical of the lake residents promoting the ZEO and Lake Overlay.

"They own no land," he said. "The land belongs to the real landowners of Oconee."

Today's meeting marks the debut of Andrea Z. Heller on the previously all-male panel. Heller was appointed by former Councilman George Blanchard to fill the seat left vacant by Bill Nelson, who asked not to be reappointed after his term expired April 1.