Planners to take another stab at zoning

By CARLOS GALARZA
carlos@dailyjm.com

WALHALLA — Defenders and opponents of a lake overlay district get another chance to sound off courtesy of Oconee County Planning Commission Chairman Tommy Abbott.

Abbott surprised many by calling a special meeting of the Commission this evening to specifically address the 1,300-foot setback called for in the Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee overlay district that has been incorporated into Oconee's Zoning Enabling Ordinance (ZEO).

The ZEO was approved last fall and goes into effect May 1.

Although the Commission met March 9 and had apparently completed its review of the ZEO by forwarding recommendations to the County Council, Abbott crossed quite a few people up by calling the special meeting.

Residents who have clamored long and hard for safeguards to keep lakes Keowee and Jocassee free from unchecked development promoted the lake overlay.

Aside from the setback requirement, the lake overlay also calls for density of not more than four units per acre, prohibits buildings higher than 65 feet above finished grade and requires that a 25-foot vegetative buffer be established.

Abbott said Monday that the Commission would only take up the 1,300-foot setback requirement.

"A lot of Commission members are not happy with the setback overlay," Abbott said.

Abbott is vehemently opposed to the overlays.

"I don't think it's called for," said Abbott, who represents District 4 around Westminster. "It's a setback to satisfy the minority few."

See ZONING, Page 8A

ZONING

Continued from Page 1A

Abbott said he thinks some kind of recommendation will come out of this evening's meeting. Any recommendation must be approved by the County Council.

Any recommendations adopted by the council would not be taken up until after the ZEO goes into effect May 1.

According to a schedule outlined by Council Chairman Reg Dexter last week, a second reading of an ordinance amending the ZEO would be held April 14, and public hearings on it would take place April 21. A final vote would not take place on amending the ZEO until the council meets again May 5, four days after the law takes effect.