Retooled tourism commission plan goes to final vote

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The public gets an opportunity to sound off tonight on an Oconee County ordinance that reorganizes the Parks, Recreation sand Tourism Commission and makes changes on how tourism-generated grant money is disbursed.

So far, Ordinance 2011-12 has sailed through two initial readings with no opposition Oconee from County Council and little resistance from the public.

The ordinance gives new powers and duties to the PRT Commission, while doing away completely with the Oconee Tourism Commission, which was created in 1992 by the three chambers of commerce in the county, and the Oconee County State Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee.

Under the new structure, the PRT Commission also would take the function of recommending accommodations tax (ATAX) funding away from the Arts and Historical Commission.

The PRT Commission also would be responsible for recommending an annual budget for the Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau.

County Council would select and appoint the seven members of the PRT Commission. Additionally, the director of the county's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, as well as the director of the Mountain Lakes CVB, would serve as non-voting members of the PRT Commission.

The ordinance also would allocate the 30 percent advertising and promotion fund of the State Accommodations Tax to the Mountain Lakes CVB.

Following the public hearing, council is expected to approve the third and final reading of Ordinance 2011-12 reconstituting the PRT Commission.

Also on the agenda are a public hearing and a final vote on Ordinance 2011-13 that authorizes the transfer of 6 acres at the county's Echo Hills industrial site to New Horizon Electric Co-op for construction and operation of a power substation.

A third public hearing and final vote are also scheduled for the Hurricane Mountain rezoning petition that would place a series of parcels in the Traditional Rural District. There's been no opposition to the rezoning request.

IF YOU GO

What: Oconee County Council meeting
When: 6 tonight
Where: Council Chambers, 415 S. Pine St., Walhalla

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