Thorough Oconee land-use code review begins to bear fruit

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THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The first wave of revisions to Oconee's land-use standards from the county planning commission have made their way to tonight's county council agenda.

Ordinances 2016-05, 2016-06 and 2016-07 would each have little to no real impact, but they reflect the first fruits of a two-year process by the commission to conduct a complete review of chapters 32 and 38 — which regulate performance standards and zoning, respectively — of county code.

"These are the first steps to kind of looking at how we can improve our land-use regulations," deputy director of community development Josh Stephens said. "These are some of the smaller fixes."

The ordinances, all of which are from Chapter 32 of the county's code and are up for first reading tonight, are meant to reflect the organizational change that took place when the county's planning and building codes offices were combined into Community Development.

Their purpose is change the title of "planning director" to "director of community development" when it comes to the county's performance standards related to sexually oriented businesses, group home developments and tattooing facilities.

"They are what we call 'housekeeping changes,'" Stephens said. "We have housekeeping changes, and then we have policy changes. There are no real policy edits in the drafts of those documents whatsoever."

Chapter 32 is broken down into eight articles, and these represent three sections of that chapter that have been reviewed by the planning commission, minor changes made and a recommendation made for council to adopt them.

"These are just part of that larger review," Stephens said. "Instead of making all the changes to 32 and 38 at one time, we're just doing them piece by piece."

Stephens said the planning commission would be talking about "bigger ways we may be able to amend our rules that will get into some policy" changes at its next meeting March 7.

Tonight's council meeting is slated for 6 p.m.

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