Zoning conflict lingers

County's appeal of jail ruling in city attorney's hands

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WALHALLA — It looks as if the zoning conflict between the city of Walhalla and Oconee County will have to be settled in court.



Goehle

Walhalla City Administrator Nancy Goehle indicated as much when she said this week that the case is in City Attorney Julian Stoudemire's hands.

"We turned everything over to him," Goehle said.

Oconee County's plans to build a new 300-bed jail on a footprint of more than 77,000 square feet next to the existing Detention Center came to a screeching halt in July after a ruling by Walhalla's Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Board declined to give the county a special exception for its jail project after residents complained at a public hearing about safety issues, noise and annoying lighting with a jail next to their homes.

Oconee filed an appeal to the Board's ruling at the Oconee County Courthouse on Aug. 12.

The county argues in its appeal that it already operates a jail in close proximity to where the new one would be built. Oconee also makes the case that its new jail would be safer, reduce noise and lighting issues, and meet standards imposed by the state Department of Corrections.

Oconee asked in its filing for the court to order pre-litigation mediation as prescribed in state law.

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Goehle said the matter is now in Stoudemire's hands so he could file a response to the county's appeal. Stoudemire has 30 days from the date of the county's filing to respond.

The Journal could not reach Stoudemire for comment Wednesday.

Goehle added that she's not been privy to any talks between city and county officials to settle the matter out of court.

County Administrator Scott Moulder told The Journal last week that he's had meetings with city officials in an effort to resolve the zoning conflict.

Meanwhile, Oconee has been unable to begin construction of a jail for which it approved a $17 million bond issue. The money has been in a county account since July.

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