

Zoning debate stirs bad feelings

Snubbed petitioner lashes out at Oconee officials

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WALHALLA — The Oconee County Council's 3-2 vote last week rejecting a petition from North Fairview landowners to have their property zoned into Traditional Rural District is still stirring bad feelings.

Jean Jennings, who submitted the petition consisting of 56 parcels on behalf of landowners, is still smarting from the council's rebuff.

This week, she lashed out at elected officials in a letter sent to The Journal.

"What part of 'No' does the County Council not understand when the majority of the people living in the rural area of Oconee County want to keep their property zoned Traditional Rural, the way it has been for 150 years?" Jennings wrote.

Jennings, who has hinted at taking legal action, contends that council accommodated the wishes of a dueling rezoning petition driven by lakeside Keowee residents in the North Cane Creek area.

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She also claims that the goal of Jim Codner, the head of Advocates for Quality Development who pushed the Cane Creek petition forward, wanted to include all North Fairview lakefront property in his petition.

"Even though they did not sign his petition, he included some signers of our petition on McMahan Road and Ebenezer Road in his petition," Jennings charged.

The bad feeling lingered into Tuesday night's council meeting when Planning Commission member Randy Abbott spoke out against the council's ruling against Jennings.

"I think you made a big error last week when you voted to do away with the normal agricultural district that they requested ...," he said. "These people have been paying taxes for 100 years and they just want to be left alone ..."

"Over Christmas, I'd like you to think about what Ms. Jennings is going through," Abbott added. "They jumped through all the hoops and did everything that they could, and yet you voted against it."

Records show that council approved both the Cane Creek and Fairview petitions on first reading April 13 and sent both to the Planning Commission for review.

On May 11, the Planning Commission voted to send the North Fairview map back to council as the dominant map with the North Cane Creek map to fill in around it.

Subsequent to that action, the Planning Department circulated drafts of a proposal to amend

the Zoning Enabling Ordinance by adding an Agricultural Residential District and Public and Recreational Land District to those already enumerated in the law.

The proposal was formalized and approved by council on first reading during a workshop meeting with the Planning Commission on June 29. Council approved a second reading of the ordinance creating the two districts Aug. 3.

In the meantime, three months went by without the Fairview and Cane Creek petitions making it on the council's agenda.

A final vote establishing the two new districts was taken Aug. 17 and passed 3-0, with Councilman

Wayne McCall abstaining.

Jennings and Codner's petitions were on the Aug. 17 council agenda, but Chairman Reg Dexter announced that they were being returned to the Planning Commission at the request of its chairman, Tommy Abbott.

A third and final vote on the Fairview and Ca

Creek petitions is expected in January.

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