

Zoning decision splits Oconee councilmen

Vote leaves Fairview
community resident
stunned, tearful

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — A nearly eight-month effort by an elderly Fairview community resident to have her property rezoned as Traditional Rural ended with her standing teary eyed outside the Oconee County Council Chambers.

Jean Jennings stood in a daze after Tuesday night's divided council vote appeared to end her protracted fight to get her petition approved.

Council voted 3-2 to approve the North Cane Creek petition presented by Jim Codner.

The two petitions had overlapping parcels with Jennings wanting them to be Traditional Rural and Codner asking that they be designated either Lake Residential or Residential.

Councilman Wayne McCall presented a motion asking that council adopt the Planning Commission's recommendation that would grant Jennings her request.

Councilman Joel Thrift seconded McCall's motion, but Councilmen Paul Corbell, Reg Dexter

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fee-in-lieu-of-tax pact with

Jennings.

Corbell said that to allow Traditional Rural in the Fairview Community near Lake Keowee would amount to spot zoning.

Suarez rebutted McCall's contention that councilmen in the majority were heartless.

"When there's a tough decision to be made, it doesn't mean that we don't care,"

he said.

Still to be scheduled is a public hearing and a third and final vote by council.

Council did hold a series of public hearings and took final votes on a series of ordinances, including one authorizing a bond issue and sale of as much as \$17 million to finance the design and construction of a new detention center.

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Schneider Electric

Council also approved a fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement to Schneider Electric in exchange for the company's pledge to invest \$5 million over five years.

Suarez said the deal is significant given that there were fears a few years ago that the company could leave Oconee.

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685

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and Marlo Suarez defeated it.

Corbell then presented a motion that designated the dueling parcels as Agricultural Residential, as recommended by the Planning Department staff. The motion carried 3-2 with McCall and Thrift opposed.

Jennings did not want

the Agricultural Residential designation because it imposes more limitations on commercial activity than does Traditional Rural as permitted by Oconee's Zoning Enabling Act that went into effect May 1, 2009.

McCall interpreted the results of the vote.

"We're putting the screws to Miss Jennings,"

he said.

County Administrator Scott Moulder worded it differently.

"What she is requesting is not approved," he said.

McCall was not finished.

He lashed out against what he called powerful influences pushing the North Cane Creek petition and said that "a select elite" had steamrolled