Zoning meeting draws crowd

THE JOURNAL STAFF

SENECA — Oconee County zoning continues to be a hot-button issue.

Scores of residents attended Saturday night's "non-political" meeting at the Masonic Lodge #185 in Seneca to talk about zoning.

Guest speaker Michael Oberndorf, a member of the group Freedom 21, addressed zoning's origin and touched on questions such as: where does zoning come from; what's behind it; and who really benefits.

Oberndorf traced zoning as well as all the buzz words associated with it — smart growth, sustainable development, land use and future land use — to a U.N. plan called Agenda21 that was adopted in 1992.

Larry Linsin, one of the event's organizers and promoters, estimated a turnout of more than 100 people.

Gary Owens, a former president of the group Advocates for Quality Development, said he attended because the event was billed as an anti-zoning meeting.

"It piqued my interest," Owens said. "I'm always interested in hearing opposing views."

Councilman Wayne McCall said he came away from the meeting with the sense that people are more opposed to the way zoning is being handled in Oconee than to zoning itself.

Jean Jennings, who has a pending rezoning petition before the Planning Commission and Oconee County Council, spoke at the meeting about her frustrations with the process.

Linsin said he saw by a show of hands that attendees were interested in future meetings.