

Clemson to consider annexing

BY NORM CANNADA
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CLEMSON—The developers of a planned Oconee County condominium project are seeking annexation into the city of Clemson, a move that has county administrator Scott Moulder concerned about a potential loss in

revenue and Clemson's possible future moves into Oconee.

The city's planning commission is scheduled to consider the proposed annexation and zoning request of the 7,667-acre tract, which is the planned site of Lakeside Lodge Clemson, at its meeting at 6 p.m. Feb. 12

in council chambers at City Hall. If recommended to the council, city administrator Rick Cotton said the council would have to hold a public hearing and pass two readings of the ordinance before the requests could be approved.

Lakeside Lodge Clemson is a \$40 million development that plans to

have about 118 condomini-



Mudge

ums near the intersection of U.S. Highway 123 and S.C. Highway 93.

Steve Mudge, one of the developers for the project, said there

were "multiple things"

Oconee property

that led to the decision to seek annexation into the city.

"One, they want us to come in," Mudge told The Journal on Thursday.

"Two, their services are closer; they're probably more responsive for fire, police, EMS. Please don't say I've got a thing against Oconee County. I

don't. It's just that they're closer."

Mudge said there was an "economic development piece" being negotiated between the developers and the city.

"There's going to be some tax incentives that are still being negotiat-

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ed," he said. "We haven't figured that part of it out yet."

Cotton said the incentives that are being considered would come through reimbursements.

"If they put in facilities that are accessible to the public, then they can be reimbursed with their tax payments after the fact," Cotton said.

Moulder said he has "serious concerns" about the annexation, saying it would cost Oconee County an estimated \$100,000 in annual accommodations tax revenue once the development is completed and it could allow Clemson to annex more property in Oconee County in the future.

"Yes, we certainly have some concerns the impact of Clemson moving its city limits into Oconee County will have on the city of Seneca," Moulder said.

"The city of Seneca has some significant investment in that area. Clemson, obviously, if they move into Oconee County will have the ability to provide service utilities if they bring it across the river. Once the city limits go through Oconee County, they can continue to annex property in that

area. So we have serious concerns about protecting Seneca and the water and sewer services they have in that area."

"The accommodations tax would then be split between us and the city of Clemson," Moulder added. "Based on their estimates, we'd be looking at a loss of about \$100,000 a year in accommodations taxes once they're fully built."

Mudge said the annexation request is only in the beginning stages.

"To my knowledge, it doesn't cut the county out of anything," he said. "Seneca is miles away. Clemson has taken advantage of accommodations and hospitality taxes, and they'd be getting a real estate increment as well — not out of Oconee County, but on top of Oconee County."

Mudge said he and his partner, Leighton Cubbage, went to Oconee County asking for tax incentives, "but they declined." He added that the idea for the annexation was "kind of mutual" between the developers and the city.

"I live in Clemson and I know people, and when people started hearing about it, I started getting calls," he said. "But this was well after we talked to

the county. I think the bottom line is we kind of went to the county and wanted some support and they chose not to, and Clemson has come to the table."

Moulder said county officials felt they had already made an investment into the Lakeside Lodge and adjacent Hartwell Village projects through previous investments of \$600,000 each from the county and the city of Seneca to upgrade water and sewer in the area.

"So, there's \$1.2 million worth of public investment so that Hartwell Village and that development would have capacity to build," Moulder said. "If he's claiming we didn't offer them any incentives,

well, we disagree. There's \$1.2 million that's been spent in that area so that he could develop. If we had not made that \$1.2 million investment into upgrading sewer and water in that area, then he wouldn't have any capacity, and the city of Clemson has a moratorium on their sewer and he couldn't build anyway."

Moulder added that he has not talked to Cotton, but said he is aware the Clemson administrator "has spoken with some representatives with the county."

While the property, if approved, would be the first the city of Clemson has annexed in Oconee, property in Anderson

County has been part of the Clemson city limits for about 30 years, according to Cotton.

"We're already in Anderson County, so having property in the city limit line in Oconee wouldn't be much different, we don't believe," he said, adding that the Dellwood subdivision, which has approximately 60 homes, is in Anderson County, along with Nettles Park.

"If we can provide them high-level services and help them, that's great," Cotton added. "Obviously,

the tax value will help offset the costs to provide those services."

Cotton added that Mayor J.C. Cook contacted officials at Casto, the developer of the adjacent Hartwell Village, a couple of years ago and said Casto officials didn't have "strong interest" in pursuing annexation. Casto vice president Shannon Dixon said Thursday the company is not looking to be annexed into the city.

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