

Seneca, Oconee exploring options for Clemson annexation

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SENECA — Seneca city officials and Oconee County officials each met behind closed doors in separate sessions Tuesday night to discuss their options a day after the Clemson planning commission voted to recommend approval of a plan to annex property inside Oconee County.

Seneca City Council held an executive session to discuss the Clemson annexation for more

In an email response to The Journal on Wednesday, Mudge declined to specifically address the concerns of the two councils.

"We have no further comment at this time as we continue to explore development options," Mudge wrote in the email. "We look forward to a successful project that benefits

Clemson, Seneca, Oconee County and Tiger Nation." Oconee County council members said they are working with the city of Seneca to address the concerns related to Lakeside Lodge.

Cammick said she is concerned about how the proposed annexation would affect Oconee in the future.

"I'm concerned that if the Lakeside Lodge property is annexed, it will not stop there," Cammick said in an email to The Journal. "Just look at the urban sprawl of other cities, like Greenville, Charleston and Columbia. They devour the properties around them. We will not only lose

than an hour during its regular monthly meeting. Seneca Light and Water director Bob Fairies joined council, Mayor Dan Alexander and city administrator Greg Dieterick in the private meeting.

When they came back into public session, Alexander said no formal action was taken, but read a statement that previewed possible future action by the city.

"Before the city goes further, formal action will be required to be taken," Alexander said. "We will work with the county

revenue, but also lose the rural nature of this county, a feature that contributed greatly to my decision to relocate here. This has been a hot topic among residents, and everyone I've spoken to disapproves of the annexation."

Councilmen Julian Davis and Paul Cain attended Monday's meeting of the Clemson planning commission along with Alexander "to listen," and both also met with Alexander and Seneca city administrator Greg Dieterick on Monday.

"My largest concern is allowing another city of another county into your county," Davis said. "One of the words that was used nine times in the city planning commission — and I counted — was landlocked. Clemson is landlocked. To me, it's kind of a desperation. I feel like Clemson is reaching and this is the last point they can reach to in order to grow." Cain said he was concerned to learn at the

to protect our mutual interests."

In Wallhalla, the county council's Budget, Finance and Administration Committee — which includes all five council members — added an executive session to its agenda to discuss "an economic development matter related to Lakeside Lodge."

The council met behind closed doors for more than 30 minutes before returning. Council chairwoman Edna Cammick said no action was taken and none was necessary.

Lakeside Lodge Clemson is a planned \$40 million-plus condo-

meeting Monday night in Clemson that the city has had a plan since 2014 that looks at Oconee County as a place where it can grow. "We had no idea that they have been planning in this at least since 2014," Cain said.

Davis said the county and Seneca have each invested about \$600,000 to upgrade water and sewer services in the area and that Clemson did not let the county know of its plans while the city and county were investing in infrastructure.

"They didn't come to us while we were developing this property," Davis said. "They came to us after we had spent money on infrastructure and everything else. To form a partnership or be interested in a partnership, part of that would have been to come to the table to say, 'Hey we would love to see this area developed; we're willing to help you do that. If we can annex it,

minimum development slated to have 118 condos. Steve Mudge, one of the developers for the project, has requested annexation into the city of Clemson.

That request was approved by the planning commission this week and will go to Clemson City Council on Monday for a public hearing and the first of two readings of the ordinance before the annexation can be approved.

Oconee County administrator Scott Moulder said recently the proposed annexation would cost the county about \$100,000

we would like to pay some odd money to infrastructure. But there was none of that. Now that we've got it developed, it's like, 'We want a piece of the pie.'" Cain agreed.

"Whatever the outcome is, I think Clemson needs to be more forthright with the county in its intentions, and if they're looking to do this, I think I speak for all elected officials and county staff and probably city staff, too, saying, 'Hey, if you all are interested in doing this, now about letting us know, because we may be able to work something out, it trying to do it behind our backs — it's a little bit offensive. We would have precatated a heads up."

a year in accommodations tax revenue and would also allow Clemson to move its city limits into Oconee County for the first time. He added that the move could allow the city to move deeper into Oconee County in the future with contiguous annexations. During Monday's meeting, Clemson city officials said the request fit its comprehensive plan, which says in part that the most viable way for the city to grow is by annexing west into Oconee County.

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WILLIE SAYS:

Isn't that what this is really all about? B3

