

# Planning firms gathering data for county comp plan

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON  
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WALHALLA — The Oconee County Planning Commission got to work gathering input Tuesday night as it met with representatives from the agencies hired to assemble the county's 2020 comprehensive plan.

After a presentation from Carol Rhea of Orion Planning and Design and Cheryl Matheny from the Matheny-Burns Group, members of the com-

mission and residents in attendance were invited to begin giving input on the comprehensive plan.

Rhea said the plan should be a collective effort to produce an easy-to-understand document anyone in the county can use.

"We consider all of us to be part of this team, and we value that," she said. "We will do our best to help you end up with a plan that is structured in such a

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Walhalla resident Sarai Melendez, right, chats with certified planner Cheryl Matheny at Tuesday night's Oconee County Planning Commission meeting, held in a workshop format for the planners to gather input on priorities for the county's 2020 comprehensive plan.

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way that it is as easy as possible for you to read."

Ideally, the plan will be used by county administration, county council, the planning commission, builders and private citizens looking to make changes to their own properties, she said, rather than as a "doorstop," as one commissioner called the current plan.

Commissioner Mike Johnson said the current plan was "actively used" up until about two years ago, but that some of the goals "have kind of gone to the wayside."

That's not the vision for the

consultants working under Orion Planning and Design for the 2020 plan, Rhea said, and public input will be the key to an accessible document.

"It doesn't do us any good to work on plans that just sit on shelves," Rhea told the commission.

The representatives met with 14 "focus groups" on Monday and Tuesday before the meeting to gather information and asked the public the same questions for more input Tuesday night.

"It's important for everyone to feel they can have input in this process," Rhea said.

"This is not an exclusive club,

and you don't need a personal invitation to attend."

Rhea and Matheny said additional focus groups have been identified and will be contacted as the firms gather data ahead of their next meeting in Oconee County.

"We're going to push hard over the next three months and hopefully present preliminary findings in January," Rhea said. "Every time we come back, we want it to be a deeper dive."

Those unable to attend the meetings are welcome to give feedback to zoning administrator Adam Chapman via email at [achapman@oconee-sc.com](mailto:achapman@oconee-sc.com).