

Oconee prepping compiled draft of comprehensive plan

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WALHALLA — It took less than 15 seconds for the county's planning commission to vote on their next-to-last step for the Oconee County 2030 Comprehensive Plan — put it all together.

The commissioners voted unanimously Monday night to assemble the 10 elements, appendix and executive summary they've spent the last six months poring over. One of the last changes they voted to make was the timeframe for completion of the various objectives, goals and strategies, opting to change it to "timeframe for evaluation."

Noting some strategies had specific years for completion and others were labeled "ongoing" or "annually," commissioner Mike Smith originally proposed getting rid of the column completely.

"We have 188 strategies," he said. "When I went through all these

timeframes, there were four of them that we were going to complete by 2020 and 40 of them by 2021 — that means 44 of them that we were going to complete."

His math indicated the planning commission had 48 meetings in the next two years, meaning they'd be constantly reviewing the plan, he said.

"The county doesn't have the financial resources (or) the personnel to devote to this many of them in this short amount of time," Smith said. "We're going to get the county council into some situations where they're going to have unwarranted criticism for not completing strategies in these timeframes."

More importantly, he said, the timeframes should be driven by the data from the comprehensive plan surveys and residents themselves over the next decade. Commissioner Mike Johnson agreed the workload was heavy, though he said the proposed checklist for

evaluation could prevent the comprehensive plan from going "on the shelf again."

"The simplest thing to do is just change it to evaluation," commissioner Stacy Lyles said. "It doesn't hold us to anything as far as being completed by a certain time, doesn't say we have to have started it by that time; we just have to have evaluated it by that time."

Commissioners also voted to add a checklist of sorts to the strategies so they can be sure timely reviews of the plan are taking place.

The Oconee County Planning Commission will review the compiled version of the plan at its next meeting before sending it to Oconee County Council for further changes or acceptance. Council will host a public hearing on the plan ahead of its third reading.

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