

Plan stirs passions of commission members

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — When the Oconee County Planning Commission sat down Monday night to review the last of the 10 elements of the comprehensive plan — land use — a few passionate words were shared amongst members.

Specifically, it was the future land use map at the center of most of the conversation — its categories, their definitions and the designated colors all got hard reviews by the commissioners.

The map itself, much like the comprehensive plan, is required by state law. Oconee County's local codes make a few references to it, planning director Adam Chapman said, but his office doesn't use it on a daily basis. The colors on the 2030 draft map are a hypothesis at best, he said, and were written in pencil awaiting input from the commission.

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Problems arose when the word “zoning” appeared in the conversation, though Chapman said the future land use map is not a zoning map.

“Ten years ago, did anyone think Hartwell Village was going to be there? Or that 1,000 bed student housing complex?” Chapman asked the commission Monday. “I don't believe anyone here would have thought that, but maybe they did. It's just kind of trying to rub the magic eight ball and see what's going on.”

A few members of the commission expressed concerns County Council would see the map as a recommendation to restrict land use rather than an estimate for how the county might look in a decade.

“In the rural communities, we don't take kindly to zoning,” commissioner Stacy Lyles said. “The majority of the county allowed zoning to go through ... without it being forced on everyone. And that's what an HOA is for — an HOA allows the neighborhood that you move into to control what happens there.

“The majority of Oconee County does not want to be told, ‘You can do this and you can't do that.’ We know there has to be some type of limitations as far as safety and things like that, but that is the whole reason that I didn't like this element and wanted it changed because I represent a huge (swath) of rural Oconee County and this would not fly where I come from.”

Commissioner Mike Smith noted the whole county doesn't fall under any kind of “rural” setting, and the board is tasked with looking out for the county as a whole.

“There are areas that are starting to get very compressed, and there are problems that are occurring and it's not controlled by HOAs,” Smith said. “Somehow or another there's got to be a compromise here.”

The commission worked to tweak the

CATEGORIES ON FUTURE LAND USE MAP

- Agriculture preservation
- Industrial
- Parks and Recreation
- Residential
- Rural
- Rural Suburban
- Suburban Transitional
- Sumter National Forest

definitions of the various categories on the future land use map to include more references to farming outside the “agriculture preservation” designation. It also voted to adjust some colors to make it a little easier to differentiate and remove some of the “controlling” words.

Commissioner Gwen McPhail said many businesses don't even glance at the future land map when trying to find a spot to set up shop in Oconee County. They're looking at acreage and neighbors more than anything, she said.

“Our (land use) strategies are much more important than this map,” McPhail said.

The map is a reference at best, Chapman said, noting a business that support industrial purposes is more likely to locate near an “industrial” area rather than a “residential” one — but that's not to say they couldn't.

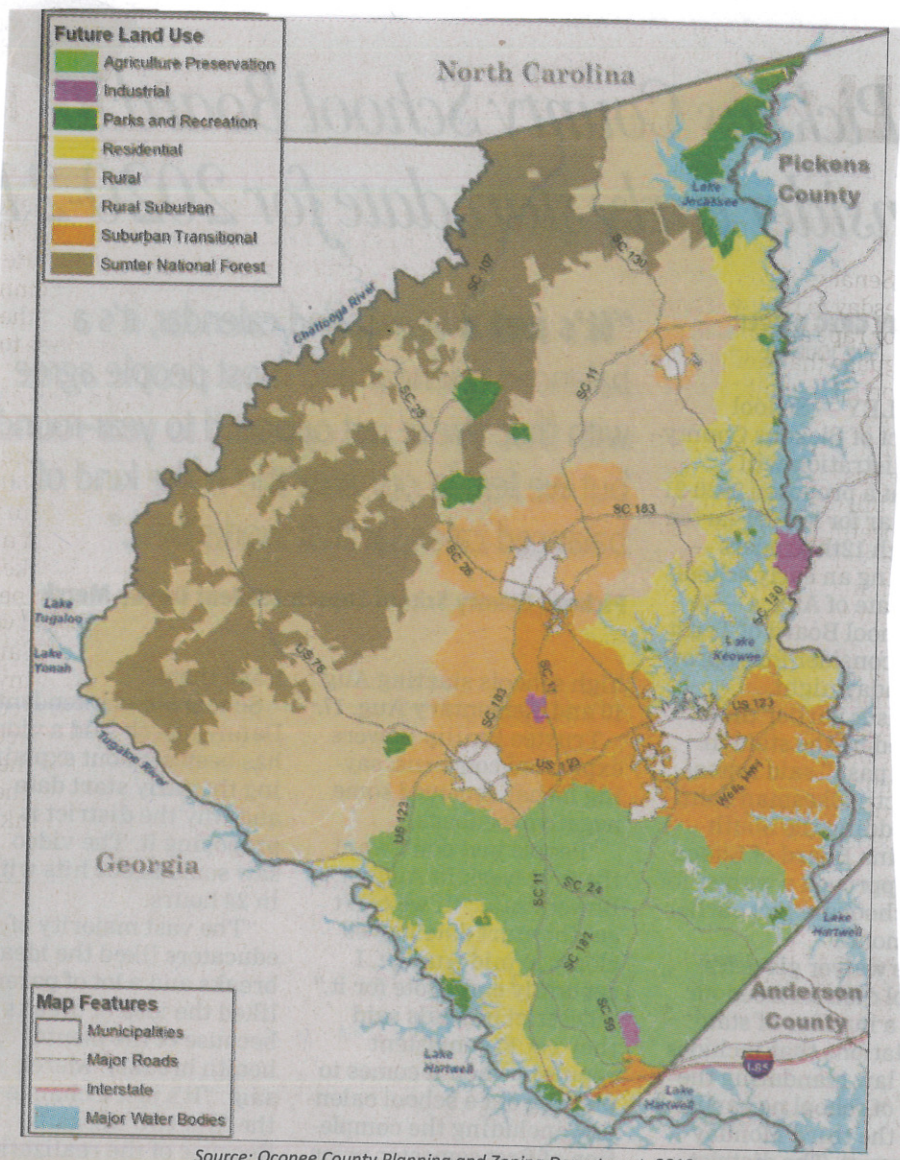
“The future land use map is not law,” Chapman said. “It does not say, ‘You can only do this with your land, you cannot do this with your land.’ It's a hypothesis of what the county could look like given our past growth. We'll use the future land use map as a guide to navigate proposed changes.

“We have the control-free district, which a lot of people very much like, so the future land use map is not something we use on a regular basis.”

RED LOCKS TO PUT ON (E-Y-R)
Top Guns Mini-Store, Salem
Beginning on October 9, 2019
Ending on October 9, 2019
Completed on October 16, 2019 at 09:11 AM

TUOWI ROOF FLOOR INWOT PAID TO OT RENT NAME UNIT UNIT

There are 0 UNITS in the list



Source: Oconee County Planning and Zoning Department, 2019

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

This draft of the future land use map for the Oconee County 2030 Comprehensive Plan will have some changes made after Monday night's planning commission meeting.