

'A beautiful lake'

Crowd shows up to special council meeting to back ordinance protecting lakes

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Waterfront lots on Lake Jocassee and Lake Keowee now have more defined density requirements.

Oconee County Council unanimously backed ordinance 2022-24 to change Chapter 38 (zoning) of county codes in the lake overlay district

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Oconee County Council members were greeted by a full chamber of residents at Friday's special called meeting.

to increase the minimum lot size to half an acre and maximum density to one unit per half acre for lots that are within 200 feet "of the full pond contour of Lake Keowee and Jocassee."

Council convened Friday's special called meeting to a packed chamber, a clear majority in favor of further protecting the lake to prevent erosion and maintain its scenic nature. Approximately 40 people signed up to speak, and roughly less than half that number spoke in the public hearing — all but one or two in favor. One official on a county commission board told The Journal he estimated about 5,000 people with property on the lake were represented by various neighborhoods at the meeting. Mailers and signs were also posted throughout the lake overlay to bring awareness about the meeting.

"It's a beautiful lake, it's a wonderful place to live," James Thomas Jr. of the Pinnacle Point community told council about his support of the ordinance. "We feel like those rules should be codified so there's no misunderstanding about the (density) size."

David McMahan said he was in favor of the requirement, but called for more enforcement of the vegetative buffers that are largely policed by Duke Energy

fers," he said. "My vegetative buffer is intentionally double what is required. I want us to have clean drinking water."

Current standards apply within 750 feet of the lakes and stipulate that no single-family or multi-family development should have a net density greater than two units per acre within the overlay district. The planning commission had unanimously backed the ordinance as written.

The ordinance goes into effect for all future development and does apply to single and multi-family developments, according to Councilman Paul Cain. One resident spoke against the ordinance because they did not believe it would apply to multi-family developments, but Cain later clarified it did.

Councilman John Elliott reiterated the lake overlay remains intact and that "this is just 200 feet from the line where we're restricting it to one half minimum acre lots."

Councilman Julian Davis said the local "area has been discovered" by others wanting to move into Oconee.

"It's great to see the amount of people calling Oconee County home, just like I do," he said, saying he was in favor of protecting the lakes.

As a surveyor, Councilman Glenn Hart seemed to imply he could find a way around the ordinance in getting down here, I kind of fell in love with the place."

He traveled to New York to work in the office a few days a week, but when quarantine mandates

nas a self-proclaimed soft spot for kids — if he would consider helping out.

"When she told me it was for kids, I says, 'I'm going

The inception of the Pontoon Pizzeria can be blamed on COVID-19. Brooklyn native Barletta met a man from Greer