



MINUTES

6:01 PM, MONDAY, MAY 1, 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

Members Present: Mr. Ownbey
Mr. Gramling
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Kisker
Ms. Lyles
Ms. McPhail
Mr. Pearson

Staff Present: Gregory Gordos, Senior Planner – Community Development
David Root, County Attorney

Media Present: None.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Ownbey called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Invocation by County Council Chaplain

Mr. Root gave the invocation.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Pearson motioned to approve the minutes from April 3, 2017 as amended. Mr. Kisker seconded the motion. The motion passed 7 – 0.

4. Public Comment for Agenda and Non-Agenda Items (3 minutes)

None presented.

5. Mr. Richard Blackwell, Executive Director of Oconee Economic Alliance, and, Ms. Janet Hartman, Destination Oconee Manager of Oconee Economic Alliance, to provide an update on economic development

Mr. Ownbey introduced Mr. Blackwell and invited him to speak before the Commission. Mr. Blackwell introduced the Oconee Economic Alliance Report for 2016 and provided statistics on current tax revenue, industrial and job growth, and physical areas in the county where this growth will have an impact on infrastructure and housing. The intersection of US-123 and US-93, the Bountyland area, Shiloh Road, and others were noted as nodes of activity in the near-future.

Discussion followed. Mr. Kisker asked about any loss of industrial companies or jobs over the past few years. Mr. Blackwell noted that recent facilities expansions were huge for the region, including the Toccoa area of Georgia, but that the competition with Mexico for labor was a very real threat. Ms. Lyles asked about housing growth. Mr. Blackwell noted that housing construction over \$300,000 was constant but that workforce housing was not being met by the market at this time.

Mr. Blackwell introduced Ms. Hartman and invited her to speak before the Commission. Ms. Hartman detailed the Designation Oconee document, adopted by Oconee County Council as well as the local municipalities, as a guiding principal for growth, tourism, branding, and establishing a sense of place for the county. She noted the new gateway signage on US-123 and Highway 11 as a recent implementation of that vision. Establishing design guidelines in Walhalla, applying Appalachian Rustic Elegance design, improving public access points to the county to provide visual impressions were noted as future goals. The success of "Think Oconee" branding was also acknowledged.

6. Mr. Mike Smith to provide a presentation on sign code

Mr. Ownbey invited Mike Smith to speak before the Commission. Mr. Smith introduced the topic of signage as related to other Planning Commission conversations about corridors and tourism. He stated that the need for road signs advertising a business has diminished due to the internet and GPS technology and that a logo is just as effective as text.

Mr. Smith presented a PowerPoint presentation comparing the communities of unincorporated Oconee County (Applewood Shopping Center) versus the City of Clemson. The Gateway Village development in Clemson was praised for its low-impact monument sign and stone design.

Mr. Smith then presented a visual representation of seventy five (75) square feet on the wall and road lane widths on the floor, using tape, to demonstrate visual impact of a sign of that size.

Discussion by the Commission followed on sign square footage.

7. Continued Discussion on Chapter 32 Article VIII – SIGN CONTROL (Ord. 2017-09)

Mr. Gordos introduced the matter before the board. Mr. Gordos noted that a draft Ordinance 2017-09 was included in their Backup information. The text amendment to Chapter 32 Article VIII – SIGN CONTROL would redefine "billboard" to differentiate between on-premise commercial signs and off-premise billboards advertising a business at a different location. Mr. Kisker asked Mr. Gordos to confirm that the definition was reflected in an email sent that morning. Mr. Gordos confirmed that the definition language was slightly modified but was reflected in the Backup information.

Mr. Gordos also noted that language had been added to the draft ordinance to create a maximum size limit for all signs within Sec. 32-520. - Requirements for billboards and other commercial signs. The maximum size was placed in brackets in the draft document and subject to debate before recommending the draft ordinance to County Council.

Discussion followed on maximum sign square footage and sign visibility from the road. Mr. Pearson recommended amending the Ordinance to set the maximum square footage of a sign to seventy five (75) square feet. Mr. Johnson suggested amending the Ordinance to exclude building-mounted signs from this requirement. The text would read:

“(d) No sign shall contain more than 75 feet of sign area per sign face. This excludes building-mounted signs and structures considered billboards as defined by this chapter, which may contain up to 672 square feet of sign area.”

Mr. Pearson made a motion, seconded by Ms. McPhail, to recommend Ordinance 2017-09 as amended. The motion passed 7-0.

8. Brief Discussion on Planning Commission procedure moving forward in 2017

Mr. Gordos stated that per the direction of Administration and at the request of members of the public, all future Planning Commission meetings shall be broadcast on the YouTube platform both live and as a recording, similar to the current procedure for the County Council. He noted that in order to be visible on camera, the Commission must move from the open “roundtable” format to a more formal seating arrangement in the Council Chambers platform. The Planning Commission is able to return to the roundtable format at a future date, so long as the table is visible on-camera.

Mr. Gordos recommended that the Planning Commission review the Model Rules for Parliamentary Procedure for South Carolina Counties and agreed to email a copy to each Commission member prior to the next scheduled hearing.

9. Old Business

None Presented.

10. New Business

Mr. Ownbey read aloud the letter from Oconee County Council dated April 24, 2017 providing the Planning Commission guidance on planning for road corridors throughout the County. Corridors of interest were specified, with US-123 of particular interest. The Commission agreed to allow Chairman Ownbey to work with planning staff to set up a meeting with Clemson University in order to assist with the planning effort.

11. Adjourn

Mr. Ownbey motioned to adjourn. The motion passed 7-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.