



Oconee County Planning Commission

415 S. Pine Street, Walhalla, SC

29691

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Minutes

Planning Commission Special Called Meeting

November 30, 2009

The Oconee County Planning Commission held a special called meeting on November 30, 2009 at 6:00 PM in the Conference Room at the Oconee County Administrative Building, 415 S. Pine St., Walhalla, SC 29691.

Members Present: Tommy Abbott (Chairman)
Ryan Honea, (Vice Chairman)
Randy Abbott
Howard Moore
Andy Heller

Art Holbrooks (Planning Director)
Aaron Gadsby (Planner)

Media Present:
Carlos Galarza, Daily Journal
Ashton Hester, Keowee Courier

Item 1: Chairman Abbott called the meeting to order.

Item 2: Public Comment (limited to specific capital projects)-

Steve Moore- discussed the need to prioritize capital projects and that he supported putting three projects toward the top of the list. Mr. Moore stated that the county should deal with the Courthouse, the Detention Center, and the Seneca Library. However, the library's needs could be addressed without spending 9 million dollars though purchasing an existing building. Mr. Moore also stated the County was setting a precedent with the Westminster Fire Station that would require new fire stations in all the municipalities. Other projects involving water and sewer should have to generate their own funds and Oconee County is not in the sewer business.

Susie Cornelius – Ms. Cornelius stated the Commission was not in a position to prioritize projects and that they needed more information before discussing the school districts projects, like demographics, ingress/egress on existing corridors, and cost. Ms. Cornelius stated that the jail was a problem and that none violent offenders should be housed somewhere else. Ms. Cornelius asked the Commission to have the legislative delegation come before them and explain why some of the Title 5 funds are not coming to the County for jail purposes. Other projects need more information, like the Westminster Fire Station, and the I-85 sewer infrastructure.

Donna Linsin- Ms. Linsin encouraged the Commission to only prioritize and recommend to County Council those projects that need finished. People are facing many hardships and this is not the time for extra projects. Ms. Linsin felt that the I-85 sewer project should be put on hold for now. However, the Courthouse, the new jail, renovation of the old courthouse, and roads and bridges should be prioritized as needed.

Eddie Martin- Mr. Martin thanked their Commission for all their work and stated that the work they do is appreciated. Mr Martin raised concerns regarding the School District's proposal to build a 40-50 million-dollar High school. The rural roads at the proposed location do not support the proposal. In addition, the proposed site is located along a state scenic highway and an environmental impact statement should be brought up. Mr. Martin was also stated that if the high school were removed a sense of community would also go with it.

John Adams – Mr. Adams spoke on behalf of the Library Board and shared with the Commission that the Council funded a study in 2000 to review the library system in the County. This study recommended an expansion and relocation of the Seneca Library and for improvement in the other branches. Unanimous consent was given by the Library Board to locate the new library at the location of the New School in Seneca. The County signed a lease with the School District which gives the County a five year window to build the library at that location. Mr. Adams stated that the Library Board would like to see the Seneca Library moved up the list to the critical needs category.

Sue Baldwin- Ms Baldwin, Library Director, stated that the Library system is being used to help people look for work and help find places to get help. Ms. Baldwin asked the Planning Commission to move the Seneca Library to the top of the prioritized list.

Item 3: Consideration and Prioritization of Capital Project List – Mr. Holbrooks stated that the Commission was to prioritize those projects it felt to be most needed in Oconee County in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and to facilitate that the Staff had developed a suggested format for sending a list to Council. Staff recommended that the Commission list those projects considered as 'Critical Needs', 'Important Projects', 'Near-term Future Needs', and 'Further Study and Consideration'. Mr. Holbrooks also stated that Chief Burdette was available to discuss the Westminster Fire Station. Chief Burdette briefed the Commission on the history and status of the Westminster Fire Station. Discussion followed.

Following Mr. Burdette's presentation, Chairman Abbott lead the Commission in a discussion of each of the projects listed on the draft list prepared by Staff. The Commission discussed each of the projects and asked for more information. Mr. Holbrooks stated that the department would arrange for the presentations the Commission requested and also make corrections to the draft list as indicated by the Commission.

Item 4: Adjourn