
Meeting agenda June 21, 2021

1. Call to order
2. Invocation
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Approval of minutes 06/07/2021
5. Public comment for non-agenda items (4-minutes per person)
6. CATbus representative – Ed Halbig
7. Commission member comment
8. Staff comment
9. Agricultural Advisory Board meeting report
10. 2021 Strategies review
11. Adjourn



Oconee County Planning Commission

When & Where

5PM

Monday, June 21, 2021

Council Chambers

415 South Pine Street

Walhalla, S.C. 29691

Staff contact

846-638-4218

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BOARD MEMBERS

Mike Smith, Chairman, District I

David Nix, District II

Pat Williams, At-Large

Frankie Pearson, Vice-Chairman, District IV

Alex Vassey, District III

Gary Gaulin, District V

Mike Johnson, At-Large

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

Minutes

5:00 pm- Monday, June 7, 2021

Council Chambers - Oconee County Administrative Complex

Members Present

Frankie Pearson
Mike Smith
Dave Nix
Alex Vassey
Mike Johnson
Gary Gaulin
Pat Williams

Staff Present

Vivian Kompier
Laura Zimmerman

Media Present

Lauren Pierce – The Journal

1. Call to order – Mr. Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.
2. Approval of minutes 3/15/2021 – Mr. Nix moved to correct Item #10 of minutes. Minutes read “Mr. Nix abstained from voting.” Change to “Mr. Nix opposed.” Mr. Smith moved to correct Item #9 of minutes. Minutes read “Report included in backup.” Change to “Report included in backup was requested by the Planning & Economic Development Committee.” Mr. Pearson made a motion to approve the minutes with correction. Seconded by Mr. Gaulin and approved 7/0.

Mr. Smith made a motion that Mr. Williams’ review of 2021 Agriculture Strategy under item #13 on the agenda be moved under item #2 and that item #7, Planning Commission Meeting Time Discussion, follow Mr. Williams’ review.

Mr. Williams presented his review of the protection of agricultural land in Oconee County.

Planning Commission meeting time discussion/vote – Mr. Pearson made a motion to change the Planning Commission meeting start time to 6:00 PM, on a trial basis, to see if attendance improves; seconded by Mr. Williams. Discussion included concern for County employees’ work/life balance, concern for Commission members’ work/life balance, suggestion of a 5:30 start time, and skepticism that attendance will improve with a change. Mr. Pearson moved to amend his motion to a 5:30 start. Seconded by Mr. Williams and defeated 3/4. Mr. Vassey, Mr. Gaulin, Mr. Smith and Mr. Nix opposed.

3. Public comment for non-agenda items – Mr. Perry Smith from 4th District spoke on various subjects.
4. Commission member comments – Mr. Pearson gave an update on search for a Planning Director. Mr. Pearson also questioned the removal of the invocation and the pledge from the agenda. Mr. Smith thanked Planning Department staff for hard work. Mr. Smith reported that he recently presented Collision Report to the Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare and the Planning & Economic Development Committees and he made a comment on housing to the County Council regarding the pay discrepancy for the County versus statewide of about \$10,000.
5. County addresses assigned – GIS data – Commission reviewed GIS data that showed two major areas of residential growth in the County since 2016—around the lake and student housing.
6. Planning Commission member voting – Mr. Smith reported that County Attorney identified two specific conditions when a PC member should not vote on a particular issue:
 - a. When a member has a business interest in an issue being discussed
 - b. When a member is not knowledgeable about an issue being discussed
7. Planning Commission meeting time discussion/vote – see item #2 of minutes
8. July/August meeting discussion/vote – Mr. Smith made a motion that the July 8th and August 2nd Planning Commission meetings be cancelled to coincide with the County Council meeting schedule of one meeting per month during July and August; seconded by Mr. Gaulin. Discussion included opinion that Planning Commission meets independently from County Council, meeting schedule was voted on in January 2021, and resolve to tackle aggressive agenda that was set for the year. Motion was defeated 2/5, Mr. Vassey, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Pearson, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Nix opposed.
9. Coordination with Agricultural Advisory Board and other comments – Mr. Smith expressed concern that the Planning Commission is not coordinating activities and interacting effectively with other related committees. Mr. Smith asked for permission to attend Agricultural Advisory Board meeting to explore possibility of working closely with the Board to review and accomplish strategies in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Smith and Mr. Williams will attend next Agricultural Advisory Board Meeting.
10. Sewer meeting and tour comments – Mr. Gaulin reported on the tour of the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority plant he and Mr. Smith attended.
11. Exit 4/Fair Play, I-85 Overlay and collision map – Mr. Terry Jackson from Fair Play gave an update on the ongoing development at the Exit 4 I-85 interchange and the traffic issues that are being created and amplified. Planning Commission will continue to monitor progress of development.
12. Planning Commission open items – A map showing the traffic collisions on I-85 in Oconee County was shared. Impact fees and junkyard ordinance are still open items for Planning Commission action. Planning Commission will continue to study and discuss.
13. 2021 Strategies review – Status of the 5 strategies to address first that were selected from the Comprehensive Plan was discussed. Items #1 Housing (3.1.1.1, 3.1.1.4/3.1.2), #2 Entertainment and Recreation (5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.3, 7.3.1.4, 2.1.2.3), and #4 Downtown Retail (4.3.1.1, 5.3.2.3) are

complete in Planning Commission's review. Item #3 Protect Agricultural Lan (8.1.1.4, 6.2.1) remains under review. Mr. Williams will continue to research. He and Mr. Smith will attend the Agricultural Advisory Board on June 14th. Item #5 Road Maintenance Planning (9.3.3.2, 9.3.2.2.) is still open to review. Road conditions remain an issue, but improvements are becoming visible as the increase in the gas tax is realized. Safety for walkers and CAT bus riders is a concern. Sidewalks could be a viable solution, but there is an ordinance that does not allow sidewalks. Mr. Smith made a motion that the Planning Department revise Chapter 26-3 to allow a developer the option of constructing sidewalks within the county right-of-way with the requirement that a surety bond be posted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Vassey. Discussions included the fear of lawsuits, student housing and safety and the need for more information from the Roads & Bridges Department and CAT Bus. Mr. Smith withdrew the motion so more information can be gathered. Representatives from Roads & Bridges Department, the CAT Bus, and the County Attorney will be invited to a future Planning Commission meeting to discuss future plans and logistics.

Commission members were asked to review the remaining strategies from the Comprehensive Plan that are to be reviewed in 2021 and be prepared to discuss at next meeting. Mr. Smith devised a system to categorize the remaining strategies so that the review process can be more efficient.

14. Mr. Smith adjourned meeting at 6:38 PM.

Anyone wishing to submit written comments to the Planning Commission can send their comments to the Planning Department by mail or by emailing them to the email address below. Please Note: If you would like to receive a copy of the agenda via email please contact our office, or email us at achapman@oconeesc.com.



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Edward R. Halbig, AICP
Director

June 11, 2021

To: Oconee County Planning Commission
From: Edward R. Halbig
Re: Transit Service expansion

The City of Seneca has been operating transit service through Catbus since October of 2006. We have always provided service outside of our city limits, since it brings people to our businesses and services and allows our citizens to reach businesses in the county, such as the hospital and Walmart. The city has also maintained service to the City of Clemson and Clemson University; this also allows us to connect with the greater Catbus system.

First Steps of Oconee, in their 2002 study, determined that lack of public transportation was a main factor in preventing families with children from reaching needed goods and services. The intent of public transportation has always been to reach population-dense areas as well as areas with the goods, services, educational and employment opportunities people need and want.

The city has been able to provide that transportation to the best of its ability, and the recent acquisition of additional buses with the help of Oconee County allowed us to connect to the new industrial park and the Tri-County campus there. But there are still some significant deficiencies in public transit within the county. The City of Seneca has not extended service to the county seat though it is an important location for our citizens. Walhalla, West Union and Westminster have no transit service.

Expanding transit in the county needs to be a county-led effort. There have been numerous studies on the subject since the 2002 report, there has also been significant public interest over the years, but there needs to be the commitment to act on the studies and public interest. Seneca took four years to get a system in place. In just over four years our system will be twenty years young. Seneca expects significant growth in the near future. As we wrestle with the thought of more development and the traffic that comes with it, and as we seek to serve the disabled, the young and elderly, and any others that do not have the ability to drive themselves, we see public transportation as a benefit to everyone – in reducing car dependence, reducing traffic, increasing personal mobility and connecting people to the economy both as consumers and wage-earners.

THIS PRIORITY CATEGORY LIST WAS DEVELOPED FOR REVIEW OF 2021 'TIME FRAME FOR EVALUATION' STRATEGIES. THE CATEGORY ASSIGNMENT PROCESS, IS AN ACCEPTED PROCESS FOR THESE TYPES OF TASKS.

THE STRATEGIES NUMBERED 1 THRU 5 WERE PREVIOUSLY AGREED BY THE PC AS PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE DISCUSSED. NEXT, OUR OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO ADDRESS CATEGORIES 1 AND 2.

Category 1 –Action by PC should have positive effect on this strategy. Related PC time and implementational expense minimal. Strategy should be in the top 75 of comments received from citizens at community meetings.

Category 2 - Action by PC may have marginal effect on this strategy. Related PC time and implementational expense a consideration.

Category 3 –Action by other committees/commissions/OEA needed on this strategy and coordinate with PC – if required - during development of draft ordinance.

Category 4 – Coordination at county administrator or county council level would result in more timely and beneficial response from other municipalities and/or state agencies.

Category 5 – This strategy recently addressed or under review or is not achievable or obtainable.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LIST OF 2021 STRATEGIES LISTED
AS 'TIME FRAME FOR EVALUATION'
NUMBERS 1 THRU 5 ORIGINALLY SELECTED BY PC.
REMAINING STRATEGIES HAVE CATEGORY ASSIGNED –
SEE CATEGORY LIST FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION

- #1 Housing (3.1.1.1,3.1.1.4/ 3.1.2) #14 topic most mentioned at community meetings– Review and amend land use plans and regulations to identify and remove possible barriers to the development of a variety of housing options and residential development.
Review- Housing white paper sent to county council on April, 2021
- #2 Entertainment and Recreation – (5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.3,7.3.1.4, 2.1.2.3) #1 topic most mentioned at community meetings. PC should send letter to the Tourism Board letting them know the local residents may be unfamiliar with all there is to do in the area. Web site visitoconeesc.com highlights calendar of events monthly. Invite Ken Sloan to speak.
Review – Riley Johnson – Seneca and Ken Sloan – county tourism manager made presentations to PC. Asked for support of 2% Hospitality Tax to support tourism. Greenway Feasibility and Implementation funds in budget.
- #3 Protect ag land (8.1.1.4, 6.2.1) #21 topic most mentioned at community meetings. Limit non-ag development in productive and prime ag areas to densities and development patterns that are consistent with the continuation of viable ag.
Review – Pat agreed to review. Some suggestions: (Development Standards) - Screening, Zoning, Revise zoning ord to add Ag 5/50 Zoning categories, Urban growth boundaries, Conservation Easement, consult Ag Board.
- #4 Downtown Retail – (4.3.1.1, 5.3.2.3) #3 topic most mentioned at community meetings –
Review – Is PC action required??

#5 Road Maintenance Planning – (9.3.3.2, 9.3.2.2) #5 topic most mentioned at community meetings- sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) Ask CAT bus where they are planning for future expansion. Continue the discussion of sidewalks to identify if our current ordinance is good ‘as is’ or if it needs revision to certain areas or corridors.

Review – Sidewalk discussion. Schedule CAT bus rep for future plans in county. Review recent SCDOT improvement of Route 24 and other roads recently announced for paving.

CAT 5 3.1.1.3 – (No comments received from community meetings) Review and amend land use plans and regulations relevant policies and proposed residential developments to ensure compatibility between new residential developments and existing ag uses.

Review – See #3 above. (Development Standards) - Screening between incompatible entities. Zoning, Revise zoning ordinance to include Ag 5/50 categories, Urban growth boundaries.

CAT 4 3.2.1.4 – (No comments received from community meetings) Work with the state and other organizations to identify and secure funding for housing and neighborhood rehabilitation for declining and unsafe residential areas through the public, non-profit and private sectors.

Review- There is funding in Covid 19 bill - \$213 billion for ‘retrofitting and building affordable housing’ (WSJ, April2, 2021) How much and when will it reach Oconee?? “Rehabbed and Ready” 20 billion in tax credits to refurbish housing. (WSJ-May 25)

CAT 3 4.3.2.5 – (4 comments received at community meetings) Identify projects and promote Opportunity Zone Incentive areas.

Review – Opportunity Zone are economically distressed communities that may qualify for tax capital gain deferment. Oconee Economic Alliance can best identify these areas and contact parties interested in this type investment.

CAT 5 5.1.1.2 – (No comments received; 6.2.4.4 -decrease littering – received 26 comments at community meetings) Enhance the visual and aesthetic character of the County and its municipalities using codes enforcement, architectural review boards, and other measures as appropriate.

Review – Litter Control Ordinance recently revised (2021-09) . County has posted job offering for Code Enforcement Officer

CAT 5 5.1.2.1 – (No comments received at community meetings)

Promote the on-going improvement and maintenance of property condition and appearance of historic structures and districts

Review – Open strategy. New ordinance 2021-11 at 2nd reading that addresses this.

CAT 3 5.1.2.4 – (No comments received at community meetings.) Explore the purchase and adaptive reuse of the Utica Mill site.

Review – Contact Annie Caggiano at Oconee Economic Alliance for current info.

CAT 3 6.2.1.2 – (6.2.1 received 10 comments from community meetings) Provide appropriate assistance from County departments and agencies in efforts to identify and preserve significant lands and scenic areas.

Review – Around Lakes Keowee and Jocassee, funds are available to create, enhance and protect fish and wildlife habitats along the shores. When docks are installed a fee (\$400?) is added by Duke for habitat enhancement.

CAT 3 6.2.3.2 – Work with public conservation partners to identify additional significant natural resources including viewsheds and habitats that warrant protection.

Review – See 6.2.1.2. Review riparian ordinance.

CAT 5 6.3.2.3 – (22 comments received at community meetings) Support and coordinate with SCDHEC to mitigate identified water quality impairments.
Review – Storm Water Engineer in 2021-22 budget. LKSWPT has funds to repair septic tanks along water ways. They have tried to get interest from residents along Cane Creek for septic tank repair, Riparian ordinance review, Junkyard ordinance (drainage into ground water)

CAT 5 6.3.4.2 – (22 comments received at community meetings) Explore partnerships to develop a master plan for preserving their watershed areas surrounding our lakes including Keowee, Jocassee, and Hartwell.
Review – See 6.3.2.3.

CAT 5 6.3.4.4 – (22 comments received at community meetings) Explore and promote best practices to protect waterways in ag and developing areas.
Review – See 6.3.2.3.

CAT 3/4 8.1.1.3 – (no comments at community meetings) Work with SCDOT and other state and regional agencies to ensure projects for infrastructure facility maintenance and expansion will not be detrimental to the continuation of ag and silviculture.
Review – Public hearings will be conducted for these types of projects.

CAT3/4 8.1.1.7 – (no comments received at community meetings) Ensure that the impacts to adjacent farms and forest land is part of the deliberation and decision making for proposed public projects.
Review – Public hearings will be conducted for these types of projects.

CAT 3 8.1.2.1 – (no comments received at community meetings) Work with state and federal agencies to attract ag related grants and revenue sources and support efforts to establish pilot programs related to new ag technologies and products.
Review – Coordinate with Ag Advisory Committee on all Element 8 strategies.

CAT 3 8.1.2.2 – (no comments received at community meetings) Provide appropriate assistance to expand non-traditional and specialty ag opportunities.

Review – Coordinate with Ag Advisory Committee

CAT 3 8.1.2.3 –(no comments received at community meetings) Ensure the ability of a farm to have a farm-related business onsite.

Review – Is there anything to prevent this? Coordinate with Ag Advisory Committee.

CAT 3 8.1.2.6 – Support SC right -to-farm laws and consider adopting a county right-to-farm policy.

Review – Coordinate with Ag Advisory Committee. Can they take the lead?

Cat 3/5 8.2.1.3 – Support efforts to permanently preserve important forestland.

Review – See item 5 (8.1.1.4, 6.2.1) Forestland is now sold as carbon credits. Screening, Zoning, Revise zoning ord to add Ag 5/50 Zoning categories, Urban growth boundaries, Conservation Easement.

CAT 5 9.2.1.4 – (32 comments received about road maintenance and planning – 9.2.1.2) Explore and adopt appropriate traffic management tools and techniques available through land use regulation that utilize concept such as limiting the number of curb cuts in high traffic areas.

Review – Collision data presented to PED on June 1,2021

CAT 3 9.3.2.4 – Find and repair any conflicts that exist within the current code of ordinances to provide and maintain adequate safe and accessible trails.

Review – Is there an ordinance for trail maintenance? Parks and Recs commission should take lead.

CAT 5 11.1.2.7 – Identify the location and density of RV parks to determine if additional regulation is needed to manage traffic, ensure health and safety and address environmental impacts with particular emphasis on waterbodies.

Review –RV ordinance completed.

CAT 5 11.1.3.1 – Map prime and functioning ag properties to determine areas that may request protection from incompatible uses.

Review – See item 5

CAT 5 11.1.4.2 – Develop overlay districts, primarily along principle community entrances (highway corridors) to meet the individual needs of each district in areas such as signage, appearance, transportation needs, etc.

Review – Tried at CC level

CAT 5 11.1.4.3 – Promote development that is consistent with the character of SC Hwy 11 though the incorporation of a corridor overlay, conditional use provisions, or other mechanisms; and explore ways to preserve and maintain tree lines and scenic vistas along SC Hwy 11.

Review – Part of 24 and 28 and 107 are also scenic highway in Oconee. No support from CC for this type effort.

CAT 3 4.1.1.1 Maintain economic incentives for new and expanding industry.

Review – Incentives in place.

Cat 5 4.2.2.2 – Prepare Oconee County graduates and residents for high demand, higher wage careers and occupations, equipping them with the training and education to apply their skill in a broad and diverse economy.

Review – Medium income about \$10,000 less than State medium income. Career center training in place??? Attract higher paying businesses.

CAT 5 4.2.2.3 – Increase access to local employment opportunities that can reduce overall commuting distance and costs for residents.

Review – Is this a problem?

CAT 5 7.1.2.1 – Expand sewer service throughout areas identified by the Land Use Element as potential areas of development, while implementing appropriate measure to avoid negative impacts on sensitive areas.

Review – Municipalities control expansion. County not member of sewer board.

CAT 3/4 9.2.1.2 – Develop an ongoing systematic road maintenance and upgrade program based on steady revenue sources.

Review – Gas Tax increase resulted in improvements in rt 24. 6.4 miles of hwy 11, 6 miles of Country Junction Road and 3.5 miles of Welcome Church Road planned. Road also for about 25 to 30 roads. Time frame for this not available. Contract to be released about middle of June

CAT 4 9.2.1.7 – Enhance communication with local and state departments of transportation on current and proposed projects.

Review – See 9.2.1.2 –