

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



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

Minutes

5:00 pm- Monday, July 19, 2021

Council Chambers - Oconee County Administrative Complex

Members Present

Frankie Pearson

Alex Vassey

David Nix

Mike Smith

Mike Johnson

Staff Present

Vivian Kompier

Media Present

None

1. Call to order – Mr. Smith called meeting order at 5:00 PM
2. Invocation was led by Mr. Nix
3. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Johnson
4. Approval of minutes for July 8, 2021– Not available at this time
5. Public comment for non-agenda items:
 - a. Debbie Sewell, Oconee County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) – Thanked Commission for their support of the AAB and looking forward to coordinating efforts with regards to Ag Land. Ms. Sewell outlined a couple of items the AAB is currently working on.
 - i. Local food policy – supporting sustainability and infrastructure
 - ii. Preservation and conservation of agricultural land – looking to add county level protection. She added that Development Standards, to be discussed tonight, could be have a positive impact on protecting agricultural land.Mr. Nix thanked Ms. Sewell and asked if she would share her thoughts when the Commission discusses Development Standards.
6. Commission member comments:
 - a. Mr. Smith reminded Commission of the mandatory training scheduled for September 15th from 9:00 AM to Noon. The next Commission meeting will be a public hearing. Procedures for the meeting will be discussed in detail at the beginning of the hearing.
7. Staff Comments – None
8. Kyle Reid, Assistant Director of Public Works

- a. Exit 4 – Mr. Reid stated that he had no specific knowledge of traffic issue regarding Speedway and the established truck stop off Exit 4. He added that it is his understanding that it is State roads that are impacted by the development, and therefore the onus to correct any issues would fall on the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). If a development is off County roads, the County requires a traffic study be completed by the developer so all the impacts of the development can be considered before approval. Mr. Johnson referred to the traffic issues that the Anderson County side of the exit has experienced and wondered if Oconee County can do anything to prevent this from happening with the development of the Speedway. Mr. Reid deferred to the SCDOT. At Mr. Smith’s request, Mr. Reid will provide a contact at SCDOT that the Commission can work with to make sure that the concerns that citizens preemptively voiced are considered.
- b. Sidewalks – Mr. Reid referenced ordinance 26.3 *Public Roads (q) Sidewalks shall not be located within the road right-of-way*. Mr. Johnson explained that safety concerns guided the Commission’s questioning the ordinance. Specifically, the safety of CATBus riders who do not have designated pick-up spots or sidewalks to walk along busy roads, like HWY 123. He also noted that there are developments/neighborhoods in the County that have sidewalks. Mr. Reid explained that the ordinance prohibiting sidewalks was adopted in December 2008, so it is possible that sidewalks were included in developments prior to that date. Cost was the driving force behind the ordinance. Mr. Johnson suggested that the Commission could set a policy that would require a developer maintain sidewalks when wanted. Mr. Pearson asked if municipalities have liability insurance to cover accidents involving sidewalks. Mr. Reid declined to speak for municipalities. Mr. Pearson asked if there have been lawsuits against the County for sidewalk trips. Mr. Reid was unaware of any such lawsuits. Mr. Smith asked for confirmation that there is latitude for the Commission to create an option for a developer to include sidewalks. Mr. Reid confirmed, provided they sidewalks meet DOT standards and there is a maintenance plan that does not involve the County.
- c. Intersection of HWY 28 and HWY 188 – Mr. Smith asked if Mr. Reid had any knowledge of changes for this intersection. Mr. Reid had no knowledge of planned changes. He believes that it would be a difficult intersection to change due to the presence of the railroad and existing buildings. Mr. Reid also confirmed that the Appalachian Council of Governments would be a helpful resource regarding such issues.
- d. Mr. Pearson asked Mr. Reid what are the County’s plans to improve county roads. Mr. Reid said the paving contract should be finalized soon. Mr. Reid added that the he felt there were ample funds available to make some marked improvement to the roads. Additionally, quick fixes like pot holes can be reported on an individual basis. Mr. Pearson asked if there are any objections to added a bike lane to County roads. Mr. Reid had no objections, but explained it would come at cost considering the width of the roads and the topography of the County.
- e. Andy Whiten – farmer, represents Young Farmers Ranchers. Mr. Whiten spoke about road safety when moving farm equipment. He identified the three biggest areas of concern as mailboxes sitting too close to road and being a permanent structure, trees hanging over the road, and the absence of a shoulder. Additionally, there are weight limits on several bridges that require them to take a longer and more time consuming route to their fields. Mr. Whiten offered some suggestions.
 - i. Educating the public; need to educate for new and experienced drivers on how to negotiate farm equipment on the roads.
 - ii. Teaming up with those advocating for bike lanes, as a wider road would be beneficial
 - iii. Developing a County Ordinance that prohibits mailboxes that are a permanent structure (i.e. brick, stone).

Mr. Whiten appealed to the Commission to help the agricultural community with this issue. Mr. Reid advised that placement of mailboxes is under Federal oversight from the Postmaster General's Office. With regards to tree limbs hanging over roads, Mr. Reid asked Mr. Whiten to get him a list of roads where there are specific issues and they can mitigate where possible and then pass along to SCDOT when it is a state road. Mr. Reid also explained that the recent change in weight limits for bridges was due to a change in standards.

9. Development Standards: Lighting, Screening, and Buffering – Mr. Smith explained that this is on the agenda to provide transparency on the Commission's actions. The ordinance was approved by the Planning Commission in October 2020. It was sent to the Planning & Economic Development Committee (PED) and approved for County Council consideration in November 2020. However, it never made it to the County Council. The ordinance is going back to the PED in August 2021 for their review and consideration again. There is no action required from the Planning Commission.
10. Adjourn – Mr. Pearson made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Johnson and unanimously approved at 6:00 PM.