OCONEE COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION
415 S. Pine St. Walhalla, SC 29691
864.638.4218
OconeeSC.com
planninginfo@oconeesc.com

COMMISSION MEMBERS

David Nix, District 2
Teresa Spicer, District 1
Joe Fravel, District 4
Mike Johnson, At-Large
Mickey Haney, At- Large
Brit Adams, District 3
Jake Marcengill, District 5

STAFF
DeAnn Hester

MINUTES

6:00 pm, Monday October 5, 2026
Oconee County Council Chambers

1. Call to Order – Chairman Nix called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Invocation was led by Mr. Johnson

3. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Marcengill

4. Approval of minutes from, 2026 – Mr. Adams made a motion to approve the minutes; Seconded by Ms. Spicer; Approved unanimously.

5. Public Comment for *Non-Agenda Items* (4 minutes per person):

6. Commission Member Comments: None

7. Staff Comments: Ms. Hester reviewed the ordinance schedule and advised that the October meeting was intended to identify discrepancies and obtain additional direction on the drafts. A final Planning Commission vote would be required at the November meeting. If approved, the proposed ordinances would proceed to the Planning and Economic Development Committee on November 10, County Council for first reading on November 17, second reading at the first Council meeting in December, and third reading and public hearing during the first week of January. Staff clarified that the Planning Commission public hearing on the proposed chapters would occur at the November meeting.

8. Discussion regarding Revisions to Chapters 26, 32 & 38

a. Public Comment: None

Chairman Nix made a motion to continue the meeting until the Commission completed its work or 8:30 PM, whichever occurred first; Seconded; Approved

unanimously.

Chairman Nix invited members to identify concerns, corrections, and drafting issues within the proposed revisions. Staff requested that members provide specific page or section references when proposing changes and advised that the drafts reflected prior Commission meetings and workshops, subject to correction where prior direction may not have been accurately carried forward.

The Commission discussed the transition from a private driveway to a private drive and from a private drive to a private road as additional dwellings are served. Members expressed concern regarding the burden placed on an individual property owner whose additional dwelling causes an existing access to cross a regulatory threshold. The Commission discussed the difficulty of distinguishing incremental or “organic” growth from a planned major subdivision.

The Commission identified an incorrect easement width in §32-229. The Commission agreed that private drives should have a minimum 20-foot roadway easement and 20-foot driving surface. Following additional discussion, the Commission agreed that private roads should have a 32-foot roadway easement. Staff advised that those dimensional standards would be corrected wherever applicable throughout the draft.

The Commission discussed how stormwater facilities would be accommodated where the roadway easement is limited to the driving surface. Members discussed the respective responsibilities of the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services, the project engineer, and County staff. Staff expressed concern regarding adoption of a standard requiring roads to “adequately shed” runoff without an objective standard that could be consistently administered.

The Commission discussed the proposed use of the 2021 SCDOT roadway design manual for private roads. Members questioned whether a manual focused on roadway geometry and design speed adequately addresses construction quality. Mr. Haney suggested that SCDOT highway construction standards also be reviewed. Staff advised that §32-230 already cross-references County construction standards in Chapter 26 addressing matters including construction, compaction, drainage, paving, and related requirements.

The Commission discussed whether private road regulations should remain in Chapter 32 or be returned in whole or in part to Chapter 26. Staff reviewed the direction received to maintain public road regulations in Chapter 26 and move private subdivision and land-development road standards to Chapter 32 while retaining necessary cross-references. No formal change to that organizational structure was approved.

Members continued discussing existing private drives that reach the threshold requiring conversion to a private road. The Commission acknowledged that applying new standards to existing access arrangements presents practical difficulties and discussed whether the issue may require additional review after the revised regulations have been implemented.

Mr. Haney stated that he believed the ordinance revisions should remain primarily focused on major subdivisions and expressed concern that portions of the proposed revisions extend beyond that scope.

The Commission reviewed Chapter 26 and identified organizational and labeling concerns within §26-2. Staff agreed to revise the section for clarity while preserving its intended substance.

A member questioned language in Chapter 26 stating that County road improvement projects should match existing County standards "to the extent practical." Staff clarified that the Roads and Bridges Department would make that determination when improvements are made to existing County roads that may not meet current standards.

Members were encouraged to submit purely editorial or typographical corrections directly to staff rather than using meeting time for those items.

The Commission reviewed §32-177 and discussed the appeals language referencing the "board." Staff determined that the intended reviewing body was the Planning Commission and stated that "board" would be changed to "Planning Commission" throughout the applicable paragraph.

The Commission agreed that defined terms should be consistently italicized throughout the final drafts.

The Commission discussed whether a definition of a flood easement should be included, particularly in areas affected by Duke Energy lake-related easements. Staff agreed to research whether the term is used elsewhere in the ordinance and whether a separate definition is necessary.

Members reviewed the definitions of private drive, private road, and private roadway easement and discussed potential confusion between the terms "road" and "roadway." Staff agreed that the terminology would continue to be reviewed for consistency.

Staff specifically asked the Commission to review the newly drafted student housing provisions prior to the November meeting.

The Commission discussed whether a separate definition of modular home should be included. Staff explained that modular homes are treated in the ordinance as site-built homes once installed and that a separate definition was

therefore unnecessary. No change was directed.

The Commission discussed the definition and treatment of exempt subdivisions. Staff reviewed the State-law subdivision exceptions contained within the definition of subdivision. The Commission agreed that a separate *Subdivision, Exempt* definition should be added for clarity.

The Commission identified the definition of *Potable water* for correction and directed staff to use the previously discussed definition from an earlier draft.

The Commission also discussed the definition of *Street* and prior drafting intended to distinguish the term from "public road." Staff agreed to reconcile the definition with prior drafting and its use elsewhere in Chapter 32.

A member questioned deletion of language addressing adverse effects to the water table. Staff explained that the matter is administered through the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services and is not a standard the Planning Department can independently determine or enforce.

9. Recess

Chairman Nix made a motion to recess the meeting for five minutes; Seconded by Mr. Haney; Approved Unanimously.

Chairman Nix called the meeting back to order following the recess.

10. Continued Discussion Regarding Revisions to Chapters 26, 32, and 38

The Commission resumed its review of Chapter 32 and discussed the final plat review period. Staff clarified that the Planning Director is required to issue a written approval or denial within 30 business days and that the review period may be extended by 10 additional days when review by another agency is necessary, provided the applicant receives written notice of the extension and the reason for it.

The Commission then discussed appeal periods in Chapters 26 and 32. Members noted inconsistent references to "working days," "*business days*," and unspecified "days." The Commission agreed that applicable references should be standardized to business days, including the 10-day appeal period, in order to provide a clear and consistent period that accounts for weekends and holidays.

The Commission briefly returned to the discussion of modular homes and confirmed that a separate definition was not necessary.

Staff requested direction regarding townhouses in the Chapter 38 zoning use matrix. Staff noted that townhouses had been separately defined but had not been assigned zoning classifications within the matrix. The Commission discussed the distinction between townhouses, duplexes, single-family residences, and multi-family development. The Commission directed staff to

add townhouses to the matrix using the multi-family classifications as the initial drafting approach, subject to additional review at the November meeting.

The Commission discussed the treatment of uses not expressly listed in the Chapter 38 zoning matrix within the General Use District. Members expressed concern that placing the General Use District within the matrix could unintentionally prohibit uses that are currently allowed unless specifically restricted. The Commission discussed its intent that the General Use District remain different from other zoning districts in this respect.

The Commission agreed that §38-9.1 should be revised so that the provision prohibiting uses not expressly permitted would contain an exception for the General Use District. Members noted that the use matrix would likely require additional comprehensive review in a future ordinance update.

Staff advised the Commission that the current ordinance states that final plats are approved by the Planning Commission, although established administrative practice has been for the Planning Director to approve final plats. Staff advised that the draft would be revised to identify the Planning Director as the final plat approval authority. No objection was raised.

The Commission then reviewed the proposed mass-grading regulations. Members questioned whether the provisions were intended to apply only to major subdivisions or to other development activity as well.

Staff explained that the proposed mass-grading standard is based on acreage disturbed rather than the number of lots or dwellings and that qualifying forestry and agricultural activities are excluded. Members discussed whether the definition, which referenced preparation of multiple lots or building sites, could apply to relatively small residential projects.

The Commission reviewed the provision limiting active land disturbance to 20 acres at one time and requiring stabilization before an additional phase may be opened. Staff explained that the practical effect of the provision is to phase large-scale grading rather than allow an entire large tract to remain actively disturbed at once.

The Commission discussed the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services land-disturbance permitting threshold. The Commission agreed that the mass-grading definition should expressly state that the provision applies to land disturbance of one acre or more in order to clarify the minimum applicability threshold.

The Commission then discussed the proposed landscaping, screening, and buffering standards. Staff clarified that the 11-lot threshold applies when a major subdivision or qualifying development containing 11 or more lots or units

is submitted for approval. It does not apply merely because an additional individual lot happens to become the eleventh lot served by an existing private drive.

Members again discussed the 11-lot threshold for major subdivisions and expressed concern regarding its application to smaller local development projects. Staff and Commission members noted that the threshold had previously been considered by County Council and that the Commission had not prevailed in its earlier effort to increase that threshold.

The Commission acknowledged that individual members may ultimately disagree with portions of the proposed ordinance but agreed to continue reviewing the drafts before the November meeting.

Staff requested that members submit typographical corrections, editorial changes, and references to prior Commission drafting decisions directly to staff. Staff advised that those submissions would be reviewed to determine whether they represented corrections to previously established direction or policy matters requiring further Commission discussion.

Staff also agreed to provide members with a clean version of the revised ordinance draft to assist in their review before the November meeting.

9. Adjourn – The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:04PM.