

A Town Hall Meeting of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Oconee Veterans Park Community Center.

Members Present: Chairman John Daniell
Commissioner Mark Thomas
Commissioner Chuck Horton
Commissioner W. E. "Bubber" Wilkes
Commissioner Mark Saxon

Staff Present: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator
Daniel Haygood, County Attorney
Kathy Hayes, County Clerk
Tracye Bailey, Executive Assistant/Deputy Clerk

Media Present: Michael Prochaska, Editor, The Oconee Enterprise

Chairman Daniell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed citizens to the meeting.

Approval of the Agenda:

On motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Saxon, the agenda was unanimously approved as submitted.

Purpose and Procedure of the Meeting:

Chairman Daniell stated that the purpose of the quarterly Town Hall Meetings is to give citizens the opportunity to ask questions of the Board and asked if anyone would like to speak.

Question and Answer Session:

Russ Page shared a handout with the Board and audience entitled "Oconee's Hidden Treasures" and discussed the "future of the past" in Oconee County. Mr. Page stated that there are 10,000 years of history on one site in Oconee County within 1.5 miles along the Oconee River. He mentioned a colonial fort, the Star Thread Mill, town of Barnett Shoals, Barnett Shoals dam, cemeteries, a grist mill and Indian activity. He plans to submit a formal proposal to the Board to preserve and promote these areas, includes the building of a museum.

Chairman Daniell thanked Mr. Page and suggested that he visit oldbarnettshoals.com website and the Star Thread Society webpage.

Jon Williams, Williams & Associates, has worked with Jane Bath regarding amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC) landscape requirements stating that the codes should be more user-friendly and design-oriented. He and Ms. Bath asked that the Board consider changes to the UDC regarding landscaping code contradictions, spacing issues, drainage and types of plantings.

Chairman Daniell stated that the Board is aware of the need for possible changes in the UDC regarding landscaping. The Joint Comprehensive Plan is presently being developed. After the completion of the Plan, a review of the Unified Development Code may take place with presentation to the Planning Commission for comments and the Board of Commissioners.

Andrew Malcom, Northwest Woods Subdivision, stated that the Covered Bridge was approved to be rebuilt several years ago and asked if it will be built.

Chairman Daniell stated that the bridge was damaged and the Public Works Department determined that the bridge should be removed. The Board did vote to rebuild the bridge at a cost of \$35,000 but the price increased to \$75,000 and funding from SPLOST funds for Historic and Scenic Sites was not appropriate.

Sarah Bell, President of Oconee Historical Society, stated that SPLOST funds should be used for historic and scenic sites, which would improve tourism. She encouraged the Board to seriously consider Russ Page's presentation of the Barnett Shoals historic area.

Michael Prochaska, The Oconee Enterprise, asked how much of the SPLOST funds have been set aside for Historic and Scenic Sites?

Chairman Daniell responded that there are \$250,000 in the 2009 SPLOST less \$25,550, which funded repairs to the Elder Mill Bridge, and \$250,000 allocated to Historic and Scenic Sites in the 2015 SPLOST.

Judy Cantrell, former Northwest Woods resident, asked why the company that damaged the bridge did not rebuild it?

Chairman Daniell responded that the bridge was damaged to a degree that it needed to be removed, but there was not enough evidence to pursue a claim against anyone.

Jeanne Barsanti, Oliver Bridge Road, questioned the possibility of a TSPLOST in Oconee County that would be allocated as 50% for roads and 50% for quality of life projects, such as sidewalks, bike and walking trails, and greenways, similar to the TSPLOST approved in Athens-Clarke County.

Chairman Daniell responded that a TSPLOST may be considered in the future. Currently, a County-wide Transportation Study is underway and should provide a list of needed projects.

Maria Caudill stated that she has been volunteering at the Eagle Tavern for eight years and would like to thank the Commissioners for providing a banner to let the public know the Tavern was open. During the day of the Tree Lighting and the Christmas Parade, 650 people visited the Eagle Tavern. Ms. Caudill shared that Roderick Easley, proprietor of the Eagle Tavern, fought at Kettle Creek. She stated that the Tavern is accepting historical items for the Tavern's museum. Regarding the Unified Development Code, she suggested that landscaping include trees that produce shade versus the number of trees required. She also suggested that underground detention ponds be included.

Jane Bath asked that the landscaping portion of the Unified Development Code be revised soon and the Board not wait a year to implement changes.

Chairman Daniell responded that the completion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan and employment of a new Planning & Code Enforcement Director will be first priorities before revisions to the Unified Development Code.

Sarah Bell asked that all the Garden Club members stand. Jane Bath asked that nursery owners and others interested in changing the landscaping code should also stand.

Nedra Johnson, Bishop, stated that Bishop is on the National Register of Historic Places and has tried to become a walkable community with sidewalks. She is concerned that the Georgia Department of Transportation is planning a three-lane road through Bishop and the impact this will have on the town. She asked that the Board help find a solution that help the town and the farmers with land outside the town that could be impacted should a Bishop bypass be built.

Chairman Daniell responded that during 2018 the Bishop Council wrote a letter to the Department of Transportation (DOT) expressing its concerns. A DOT representative met with Chairman Daniell, Mayor Johnny Pritchett and, at that time, State Representative Chuck Williams, and Senator Bill Cowsert. The DOT agreed to review and respond to the concerns of the Town of Bishop.

Jim McGarvey, Friends of Calls Creek, stated that Chairman Daniell is meeting with the Friends of Calls Creek at the Oconee County Library on January 24, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. and invited others to join but explained that seating is limited.

Chairman Daniell shared that a water resources meeting was held the previous week with the intent to focus on three specific questions to assist with long-term planning. Town Hall Meetings are held each quarter and there is a meeting with Mr. McGarvey and the Friends of Calls Creek the following evening at 6:30 p.m.

Michelle Momany stated that citizens have been asked for input for a wastewater plan regarding gravity sewer versus pump stations, water reuse, and wastewater treatment percentage allocations. She suggested that the more critical question should be: Is the County's priority to protect the creeks and establish neighborhoods or is it ease of maintenance for future sewer?

Chairman Daniell explained that pump stations have a higher probability of a spill. Gravity sewer is more expensive up front, but it is easier to maintain with safer containment.

Jeanne Basanti asked why money is left from the 2004 SPLOST?

Chairman Daniell answered that, once the vote is taken, the money is restricted for the use that was presented to the voters. Depending on the project, the Board reaches a consensus prior to beginning a project. Plans are currently being drawn to begin construction of an addition to the courthouse that will add 9,000 square feet and allow judicial functions to remain in the courthouse. Administrative offices will eventually be moved to another building. Remaining in the 2009 SPLOST are water and sewer funds, which are currently being used. Funds are available for Fire Station No. 8, which is currently in the design phase, upcoming land purchase and start of construction. In the 2009 SPLOST, funds remaining for Historic and Scenic Sites are \$250,000.00, less \$25,550.00.

Valerie Hinesley, Piccadilly Farm Nursery, asked if the landscape ordinance could be a first priority since the proposal had been completed by landscape professionals and much of the work was done. She is hopeful the proposal could be adopted into the code and the revisions should be easy to integrate into the Code.

Chairman Daniell responded that the Board appreciates the time and effort that Ms. Hinesley, Ms. Bath and others have taken to provide changes to the landscaping portion of the Code. The Board will review the changes.

Chad Keller, Barber Creek Drive, stated that the Unified Development Code (UDC) is available as a guide. He asked that the Board consider removing code requirements that are not preferred by the current Board. Mr. Keller stated that raised slab foundations and minimum square footage requirements are in the UDC, but the Board has previously voted against a rezone containing these requirements. He asked if a minimal square footage is in the UDC, is he allowed to build it? He would

like the Board to consider raising the square footage in the UDC if minimal square footage will not be approved.

Chairman Daniell explained that every rezone is different and multiple issues affect one another within a rezone. There will be several areas of the UDC that will be reviewed for possible changes.

Jane Bath stated that Valerie Hinesley, Picadilly Farm, was head of the rewriting of the Savannah Planting Code. Ms. Bath stated that the landscaping code proposal was written by Ms. Hinesley and Jon Williams of Williams & Associates.

Chad Keller asked if the County allocates more sewer for residential, could the minimum square footage of a lot be raised to prevent negative aspects of residential sewer?

Chairman Daniell responded that density will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan (housing types and sizes), and sewer systems will be considered based on the environment and health of the sewer systems.

Mary Rabai, Northwest Woods, asked if there has been any progress with the Animal Services building?

Chairman Daniell responded that there should be a decision by April 2018 to refurbish the existing building or plan for a new building.

Executive Session: On motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Thomas, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn into Executive Session at 7:01 p.m. to discuss personnel.

No action was taken in Executive Session.

On motion by Commissioner Saxon and second by Commissioner Thomas the Board adjourned Executive Session at 7:40 p.m. On motion by Commissioner Wilkes and second by Commissioner Horton, the Board adjourned back into Regular Session.

There being no further business, on motion by Commissioner Saxon and second by Commissioner Wilkes, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

County Clerk

Chairman

Date