

The second meeting of the Joint Comprehensive Plan Stakeholders Committee was held on Tuesday, March 14, 2017 at 6:30 pm in the Community Room of the Community Center at Oconee Veterans Park.

Members Present:

Bob Bishop, Charlie Baugh, Kent Chapman, Lisa Douglas, Tammy Gilland, Charles Hunt, Laura Iyer, Tommy Malcom, Dorann Mansberger, Daniel Marks, Becky Moore, Ed Perkins, Andy Pippin, Patricia Sebring, David Wenner, Marcus Wiedower, Brian Broderick (Watkinsville), Dr. Philip Brown (Board of Education).

Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Staff:

Justin Crighton, Planner
Jordan Shoemaker, Project Specialist
Eva Kennedy, Project Specialist

Elected Officials:

Chairman John Daniell, Oconee County Board of Commissioners
Commissioner Chuck Horton, Post 2

Oconee County Staff:

B.R. White, Director, Planning & Code Enforcement
Andrew Stern, Planner, Planning & Code Enforcement
Kathy Hayes, County Clerk

Media Present:

Michael Prochaska, Editor, The Oconee Enterprise

The meeting of the Joint Comprehensive Plan Stakeholders Committee was called to order at 6:36 p.m. by Justin Crighton. Mr. Crighton gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting and asked Chairman John Daniell and B.R. White, Director, Planning and Code Enforcement, to speak to the group.

Charge from the Board of Commissioners:

Director B.R. White reviewed reasons for having a comprehensive plan and stated that, due to the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, all local governments are required to have a plan. A comprehensive plan allows citizens to have a voice in the development of their community; provides a vision for the future; identifies challenges; provides for rational growth while preserving natural and historic resources; and, promotes fiscal responsibility for infrastructure, schools, parks/greenspace and facilities. Economic Development is encouraged and supported with the plan and is a guide for government and the community for short and long-term decisions. Mr. White also pointed out that the demographic data and analyses with the plan is used each time funding or a grant is needed.

Chairman John Daniell discussed that the Board would like to see the committee consider character areas that could be tied to the Unified Development Code. The goal is that citizens are aware of the land use prior to rezoning of a property. The committee has the opportunity to influence the future of Oconee County.

Commissioner Chuck Horton asked that the committee consider the type of property uses for each area of the county. He stated that the Comprehensive Plan is important and the Committee represents the community.

Process/Objectives of the Committee:

Mr. Crighton reviewed the Comprehensive Plan process and stated that the first Public Hearing should be held in April; the steering committee should meet monthly; two public forums will be held (beginning and end of the process); second public hearing prior to transmittal of the plan; and, adoption and completion of the plan is scheduled by June 30, 2018.

Mr. Crighton reviewed demographics of the county with growth estimates for each municipality and the unincorporated areas. Housing, age and median household income trends were included with a comparison within a 12-county region. Population changes regarding age indicate an older population, which is a common trend nationwide. Oconee County is projected to outpace all counties in the 12-county region.

Discussion among the Committee and audience:

- The School System's consideration of demographics for its decisions and location of schools.
- Oconee's sense of community is a reason for people outside of Oconee to move into the community.
- Discussions between the Board of Commissioners and the School System should be held to plan for schools and infrastructure.
- Construction of a school changes the character of an area.

Committee Grounding and Context:

Mr. Crighton reviewed the zoning process with the committee. He discussed the Character Area map and explained the color code provided on the map. The vision for the county is translated into the character areas of the map.

Discussion among the Committee:

- A vision for Oconee County should be determined. Mars Hill Road is an example of change and the need for a vision in the Mars Hill Road area.
- State Highway 53 may be the next corridor.
- The Committee should consider that other areas, besides Epps Bridge Road, will be growth areas.
- There should be protected areas in an effort to prevent the whole county from being developed as seen in other counties.
- Consider the impact of transportation areas to allow develop to follow the transportation corridors.
- Consider spreading the growth throughout the county in communities such as Bishop and Farmington.
- Discuss Transferable Development Rights and how this would affect the county.

Mr. Crighton continued reviewing the zoning process and then discussed one character area of the current Comprehensive Plan. He stated that Land Use will be discussed at a later date.

Review of Elements of Strategic Plan:

Mr. Crighton asked for discussion regarding optional elements to include. The required elements are Land Use; Transportation; Needs and Opportunities; Goals, Policies and Vision; and Work Program, which is a 5-year implementation program and report of accomplishments. Other elements suggested were parks and greenspace.

Public Engagement:

Mr. Crighton asked that a committee member volunteer to assist with the public involvement process and Tammy Gilland volunteered.

Mr. Crighton reported that the online survey has received 125+ responses. The Committee asked results of the survey and that the survey remains on the county website. Other possible methods of circulating the survey were discussed including social media.

Mr. Crighton discussed meeting advertisements. Director B.R. White stated that the Committee was appointed by the Board of Commissioners, therefore, open meeting requirements regarding advertising and official minutes will need to be followed. Other methods of notifying the public regarding public meetings were discussed.

Future Meetings and Priorities:

Mr. Crighton discussed subcommittees that were requested by the group: Transportation, Land Use, Public Information, and Parks/Recreation/Greenspace. Subcommittees will meet in the interim between committee meetings and will report to the Committee. Sign-up sheets were passed around for committee members to volunteer for the subcommittees.

By consensus, the committee agreed that the first public hearing should be held on April 4, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. prior to the Board of Commissioners meeting at 7:00 p.m.

The Committee will have its next meeting on April 11, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. Mr. White stated there are other comprehensive plans available for review on the website of the Department of Community Affairs.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Kathy Hayes, County Clerk
Oconee County Board of Commissioners

Justin Crighton, Planner
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

Date

Date
