

PICKENS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

of

June 12th, 2017

6:30pm

PICKENS COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING Administration Auditorium

NOTICE OF MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING: Pursuant to Section 30-4-80 of the S.C. Code of Laws, annual notice of this Commission's meetings was provided by January 1, 2017 via the Pickens County Website and posted next to the Offices of the County Planning Department. In addition, the agenda for this meeting was posted outside the meeting place (Pickens County Administration Building Bulletin Board) and was emailed to all persons, organizations, and news media requesting notice. Notice for the public hearings was published in the *Pickens County Courier*, posted on the properties subject of public hearing(s), and emailed to all persons, organizations, and news media requesting notice pursuant to Section 1205(d)(1) of the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Cato, Chairman
Bob Young
Terry Nation
Bobby Ballentine
Moseley Hamilton

STAFF PRESENT:

Ray Holliday, County Planner
Chris Brink, Community Development Director

Welcome and Call to Order

Mr. Cato, the Presiding Official, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Cato asked those in attendance to join in a moment of silence and for the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Cato asked each of the members to introduce themselves and identify which County Council district they represent.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Cato called for a motion regarding the minutes of the March 13, 2017 meeting. Mr. Young motioned to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Nation seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cato called for a motion regarding the minutes of the May 8, 2017 meeting. Mr. Ballentine motioned to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Nation seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Mr. Cato called for public comments on any item that is not on tonight's agenda.

There were no comments offered.

Public Hearings

Mr. Cato briefly reviewed the public hearing procedures that will be followed.

Mr. Cato opened the public hearing portion of the meeting and called for the first case to be heard.

- 1. SD-17-005 Coggins Creek S/D, 58 Lot, Open Space Residential Development located on Crumpton Lane, Easley. The proposed development is located on approximately 22 acres. The property owner is Hazel Coggins and the applicant is Crumpton Lane Ventures, LLC.
TMS# 5049-13-14-5505**

Mr. Cato stated that the Planning Commission was in receipt of a letter requesting that this item be withdrawn from consideration.

Mr. Ballentine motioned for the request for withdrawal be accepted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Moseley. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cato called for and opened the next public hearing.

- 2. LU-17-002 Expansion of an existing, non-conforming Manufactured Home Park. The manufactured home park is located on Lynch Court and Farris Bridge Road, Easley on approximately 3.25 acres. The property owner is William D. Lynch, Trustee and the applicants are Chris D. Lynch and Rhonda Lynch Lunsford.
TMS# 5101-00-72-6811**

Mr. Kevin Lunsford appeared before the Planning Commission and stated his request; that his family had an existing, 3.25 acre grandfathered mobile home park that they would like to expand; that the current park does not meet current county requirements of ten (10) acres for a mobile home park; that they would like to add units to the park in order to bring tax revenue and provide homes for those that need it.

Mr. Hamilton asked how many homes would be added to the park.

Mr. Lunsford stated that there were currently six (6) sites in the park and they would like to add eight (8) to ten (10) more sites to the park, bringing the total to approximately sixteen (16).

Mr. Ballentine asked for clarification regarding the total number of homes and the size of the mobile home park.

Mr. Lunsford stated that there would be an additional ten (10) homes or sites on the property, bringing the overall total to sixteen (16) sites on 3.25 acres.

Mr. Lunsford asked what the county guidelines were for how many per acre were allowed.

Mr. Cato answered that the county standards are two (2) sites or homes per acre.

Mr. Lunsford stated that they should be allowed to be grandfathered since the property was owned by the family for over forty (40) years.

Mr. Ballentine referenced the county's grandfathering provisions and briefly read an excerpt from those provisions.

Mr. Cato called for anyone wishing to speak in opposition.

Mr. James Long appeared before the Commission, read an excerpt of SCDHEC standards regarding mobile home parks, and stated that the proposed park expansion had not yet been submitted to SCDHEC for approval in violation of county and SCDHEC standards.

Mr. Cato asked if the applicant had anything for rebuttal. The applicant had no further statements.

There being no further comments or questions, Mr. Cato closed the public hearing on the case and called for a motion.

Mr. Ballentine motioned that the request not be approved as stated in Section 1403(b) of the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance. Mr. Hamilton seconded the motion. Motion to not approve passed unanimously.

Mr. Cato called for and opened the next public hearing.

- 3. LU-17-003 Land Use approval for a Large Scale Project (Fast Food Restaurant) in the 7200 block of US Hwy 178 in Liberty. Applicant is SC Liberty Hwy 178, LLC and the property owner of record is Carolina Community Church.
TMS# 4097-00-75-8253**

Mr. Brett Rogers appeared before the Commission representing the developer and was available to answer any questions the Commission may have regarding the proposed project; that the project is a fast food restaurant on approximately four (4) acres.

Mr. Cato asked if there were any questions or if anyone wished to speak in opposition.

There being none, Mr. Cato called for a motion.

Mr. Ballentine motioned that the request be accepted and approved as presented. Mr. Nation seconded the motion. Motion to approve passed unanimously.

Mr. Cato called for and opened the next public hearing.

- 4. LU-17-004 Land Use approval for a new 160' wireless communication tower at 1220 Brushy Creek Road, Easley. Applicant is Barker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell and Berkowitz, PC on behalf of Cellco Partnership, d/b/a/ Verizon Wireless and the property owners of record are Jerry E. Leslie and Paula P. Leslie.
TMS# 5028-16-84-1624**

Ms. Laura Goode appeared before the Commission on behalf of the applicant and presented the request and provided detail on the proposed wireless facility; that the applicant also had recently obtained the FAA "No Hazard" verification and was presenting this to staff for the file. Ms. Goode stated that the facility would be of a monopole construction; that no tower lighting would be required; that the facility met all county requirements for setbacks, buffering, and separation from existing residential (pending a plat approval and recording).

Mr. Ballentine asked how large the proposed site was.

Ms. Goode stated that the overall tract is approximately 9.50 acres; however the tower facility would be placed on a separate tract of approximately 1.85 acres.

Mr. Cato called for any additional questions or if anyone wished to either speak for or in opposition to the request.

There being none, Mr. Cato closed the public hearing for this item and called for a motion.

Mr. Cato provided for the motion to approve with the staff recommended condition. That condition being:

- 1. Prior to Development Permit approval, the proposed tower site must be separated from all current residential uses located on the subject property. Separate plats must be presented for approval and recorded that place the existing residences on separate tracts from the wireless facility.*

Mr. Ballentine seconded the motion to approve with conditions. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cato called for and opened the next public hearing.

**5. LU-17-005 Land Use approval for a RV Park and Campground located at 586 Robinson Bridge Road, Central (Norris). Applicant and property owner of record is Claire J. Gelinas.
TMS# 4077-10-27-8212**

Ms. Claire Gelinas appeared before the Commission and presented her request; that she would like to create a small RV park with 6 RV sites for self-contained units and 12 to 15 primitive tent sites along Twelve Mile River.

Mr. Ballentine asked for clarification regarding the number of sites being proposed.

Ms. Gelinas stated that there will be approximately 12 sites along the river and 6 sites for RVs would be located away from the river; that septic would be provided for the RV sites and a bath house would be provided for those using the tent sites.

Mr. Cato asked for any additional questions or if anyone wished to speak in favor or opposition to the request.

There being none, Mr. Cato called for a motion.

Mr. Ballentine motioned that the request be approved provided the standards of Section 302(b) of the UDSO be followed. Mr. Young seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cato called for and opened the next public hearing.

**6. SD-17-004 The Summit at Glassy Mountain, 254 Lot, Master Planned Residential Development (MPD) located on N. Glassy Mountain Road and Glassy Mountain Church Road, Pickens. The proposed development is located on approximately 182 acres. The applicant and property owner of record is Glassy Mountain Holdings, LLC.
TMS# 5102-00-41-6757**

Mr. William Findley appeared before the Commission and gave an overview of the proposed development, gave background information regarding his family and the property in question, and had exhibits for his presentation to the Commission.

Mr. Findley continued with an overview using visual aids showing the property in question, property surrounding the subject tract, and an overall representation of the proposed layout for the project; that the project as proposed will have 254 lots, as an active adult community, that

will be a gated community with two separate entrances; that the roads will be privately maintained; that all the proposed homes will have continuity as to visual style and exterior construction; that there will be amenities within the community including a club house, tennis courts, swimming pool and walking trails; that within the 183 acres of the project, 107 acres will be left as open space, and 52 acres provided for the individual home sites.

Mr. Ballentine asked the significance of the properties that were providing a buffer to Glassy Mountain, as Mr. Findley stated in his presentation.

Mr. Findley stated that they do not own the properties he referenced; that he was using these as an example to show that the proposed project does not border Glassy Mountain; that there were other privately owned tracts between the proposed development and the mountain.

Mr. Andy Sherard, Site Design, appeared before the Commission to give detailed information regarding the project in terms of the design process and proposed infrastructure. Mr. Sherard stated that the home sites would only occupy approximately 52 of the 183 acres; that the density provided is below what is permitted by Pickens County for both Conventional and Master Planned Developments; that, regarding traffic, a Traffic Impact Study was conducted and the results of that study indicated that no negative impacts on the surrounding road network would incur.

Mr. Sherard further explained issues and impacts the project would have on stormwater run-off; that the project must be designed so that there are no adverse impacts in terms of stormwater and impacts to adjacent streams; that during the final design process, issues such as impacts would be addressed abiding to both Pickens County standards and SCDHEC standards.

Mr. Sherard went on to give an overview of the provision of public water to the project; that the City of Pickens would be the water provider; that the developer would have to make all necessary improvements, at their cost, to both serve the project and to ensure that the existing community's service isn't impacted.

Regarding septic, Mr. Sherard explained the provision of septic to the project; that the project will be served by a SCDHEC permitted community septic system; that there would be 10, 15, 20 homes tied to each individual system and that system must be maintained by the developer or HOA; that SCDHEC requires financial surety by the developer in order to show that they can properly maintain such a system.

Mr. Ballentine asked how many of the separate systems were anticipated and if drain fields would be provided.

Mr. Sherard stated that at a minimum there would be 10 such combined systems; that the intent would be to maximize the number provided in order to lessen the cost but to also lessen the impact; that traditional drain fields would be provided as well as adequate back up areas.

Mr. Cato asked how this project compares to the Patrick Square development in Clemson and is that project considered a cluster development.

Mr. Sherard stated that Patrick Square is similar, however there is not the same type of open space provisions; that they provide more open squares rather than the type of open space provided with this proposed project.

Mr. Ballentine asked how lighting would be provided within the project.

Mr. Sherard stated that street lighting may be provided and that lighting would be of a cut-off type.

Mr. Ballentine asked, regarding meetings with neighborhood groups and organizations, what issues were being addressed and what changes had been made to the project.

Mr. Sherard stated that they used those meeting opportunities to further explain how the proposed project differs from the traditional type of development and how the proposed project utilizes only a small portion of the overall site.

There being no further questions, Mr. Cato opened the public hearing to those that wished to speak in favor of the request and for those speaking against; that 30 minutes was given for the applicant's presentation and the same allotment of time would be given for those wishing to speak against; that names of those to speak would be called in order, according to the sign-up sheet.

Mr. Brink stated that there were two individuals signed up that wished to speak in favor of the request, Mr. Dick Merrit and Ms. Colleen Schumer. Mr. Merrit passed his time on to Ms. Schumer.

Ms. Schumer appeared before the Commission to speak in favor of the proposed development; that she was grateful for the project and the opportunity which the project represents.

There being no further individuals wishing to speak in favor of the request, Mr. Brink read the first citizen signing up to speak in opposition, Mr. Timothy Granger.

Mr. Granger, having submitted materials to staff before the meeting so that they could be made available to the members of the Planning Commission, went over those materials and provided alternatives to planning staff report items C and F regarding the *Standards for Land Use Approval*; that the density and land use character areas do not support the proposed project; that the project will set a precedent for future development in the area; that the project should be changed to ½ acre to 1 acre lot sizes.

Mr. John Parrish was the next citizen sign up to speak. He gave his time to the next citizen.

Mr. Barry Swiger appeared before Commission and read a letter from his son, Andy Swiger. This letter was presented to staff before the meeting and the letter was provided to each member of the Commission. This letter is being included in the record of this meeting.

Ms. Anita Swiger also appeared before the Commission to reiterate the statements made by her son and husband.

Ms. Allison Ranson was the next citizen signed up to speak and she appeared before the Commission. Ms. Ranson read a brief statement to the Commission; that she was an environmental engineer familiar with stormwater and septic issues; that the type of septic system being proposed for the project would be classified by SCDHEC as a large system; that she does not believe, due to rock and soil issues, that the site could handle or meet the requirements for on-site septic.

Mr. Ballentine asked Ms. Ranson if SCDHEC had to approve the use of such systems.

Ms. Ranson felt that there is not enough area on site for an adequate system to handle the project.

Mr. "Cabbage" (Don) McJunkin was the next citizen signed in to speak. Mr. McJunkin appeared before the commission and stated his opposition to the project.

The next citizen signed in to speak was Ms. Andrea Cooper of Upstate Forever.

Ms. Cooper read a prepared statement; that statement was provided to staff; that statement is also included as part of the official record of this meeting.

Ms. Cooper stated that the project would be a threat to Glassy Mountain; that staff of Upstate Forever sat down with representatives of the applicant who were unwilling to provide alternatives to the proposal; that the subject property acts as a buffer to development; that the comprehensive plan lays out this area as Rural Residential which is contrary to the project as proposed; that residential development does not pay for the growth caused by such development; that the developer only addressed item D of the Standards for Land Use approval only in regards to public water. Ms. Cooper asked that additional time be given to those wishing to speak in opposition.

The next citizen recognized to speak was Lisa Hallo who passed her time on to the next citizen.

The next citizen recognized to speak was Mr. Frank Holleman.

Mr. Holleman spoke on behalf of and in representation of several residents; that he has worked to protect many areas of the Upstate including keeping coal ash out of Pickens County; that developments of this type are a drag on the local economy; that he had no confidence in SCDHEC to protect neighboring properties or property owners; that there was an alternative to consider – sell the property to a land trust for permanent protection.

There being no additional questions and time expiring for public comments, Mr. Cato provided time for rebuttal by the applicant.

Mr. Sherard addressed the Commission on behalf of the applicant during this time. Mr. Sherard addressed the issues and comments regarding septic; that they will abide with the requirements of SCDHEC; that the septic requirements will control how the lots are ultimately laid out and developed; that the site is not part of Glassy Mountain and that 90% of the homes will not be seen from adjacent properties; that the project does comply with the intent of the comprehensive plan; that the project will generate a fair amount of taxes that will go to schools with little additional impact.

Mr. Ballentine asked Mr. Sherard how the septic development will take place moving forward.

Mr. Sherard stated that an in-depth site analysis will have to be conducted and that this analysis will ultimately determine how the project is developed and how the lots are arranged.

Mr. Ballentine asked how the existing easements to adjacent tracts will be handled.

Mr. Sherard addressed both the Mauldin easement, being 12', and the 20' easement going to the Hinkle tract; that these easements will have to be protected and if others exist then those would also have to be protected.

Ms. Shelly Smith, a neighboring property owner who also has an easement brought up that her easement wasn't being addressed.

Mr. Merrit stated that that easement as well as any easement granted by his family in the past would also be recognized and protected.

Mr. Ballentine asked again about lighting in the project.

Mr. Sherard stated that there was not yet a plan for lighting but any proposal would fully comply with the requirements of the county.

Mr. Nation asked if the project would be built in phases.

Mr. Sherard stated that that had not yet been discussed yet however, the main road would be installed 1st including all of the amenities; that to hold cost down, initially, the cul-de-sacs would be installed in a later phase.

Mr. Nation asked about funding for the project.

Mr. Sherard relayed to the Commission that full funding for the project has been secured.

There being no additional questions or comments, Mr. Cato addressed those present regarding the Planning Commission's role, obligation, and authority when making land use decisions.

There being no further comments or questions, Mr. Cato closed the public hearing for this item and called for a motion.

Mr. Cato made the motion to approve the request with conditions.

Several members of the public addressed the Commission not recognized by the Chairman.

Mr. Ballentine asked the Chairman to include two additional items and to formally read all conditions being considered.

Mr. Ballentine read the following conditions:

1. *Project shall be approved as a Master Planned Development as presented on the concept plan and associated project materials included in the application being considered, to include:*
 - a. *Minimum lot sizes of 10,890 square feet*
 - b. *Number of lots set at a maximum of 254*
 - c. *Project density set at a maximum of 1.38 units per acre*
 - d. *General lay out of the project*
 - e. *Amount of provided open space must be no less than 50% of the total project area or 91.5 acres.*
 - f. *Amenity package to include, at a minimum, tennis courts, community swimming pool, community club house, and trail network. All of which must be constructed during the 1st phase of project development. Buffering of these amenities from adjacent, internal land uses shall be as presented on the concept plan.*
 - g. *Common architectural theme*
 - h. *Use of SCDHEC approved community septic systems. Such use shall be restricted to no less than 10 lots connected to such system.*
2. *An access easement, a minimum of 20' in width, must be provided to the adjoining property addressed as 576 N. Glassy Mountain Road (Current TMS# 5102-00-43-4461). Such access easement must be moved to outside of the required 50' development perimeter buffer or, the required 50' buffer shall start at the edge of the 20' easement. The area within the easement must be removed from the development's open space calculation. If a mutually agreed upon alternative is considered, this alternative must be approved by the Community Development Director; adhering to the spirit of the MPD concept plan and UDSO standards for MPDs.*
3. *An access easement, as noted on associated plats as being 12' in width, must be provided to an adjoining tract identified, currently as*

TMS# 5102-00-30-8372, and shown on all project plans and respective final plat. Such access easement must be outside of the required 50' development perimeter buffer or, the required 50' buffer shall start at the edge of the 12' access easement. The area within the easement must be removed from the development's open space calculation. If a mutually agreed upon alternative is considered, this alternative must be approved by the Community Development Director; adhering to the spirit of the MPD concept plan and UDSO standards for MPDs.

4. *An access easement, as identified by the affected property owner, must be provided to their adjoining tract identified as TMS# 5102-00-22-8065, and shown on all project plans and respective final plat. Such access easement must be outside of the required 50' development perimeter buffer or, the required 50' buffer shall start at the edge of the access easement. The area within the easement must be removed from the development's open space calculation. If a mutually agreed upon alternative is considered, this alternative must be approved by the Community Development Director; adhering to the spirit of the MPD concept plan and UDSO standards for MPDs.*
5. *Any street lighting provided for in the development must be of the "cut-off" type.*

Motion to approve the request with the stated conditions was seconded by Mr. Young. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Naming of the Crosswell Fire Station

Mr. Ballentine made a motion that the naming of the Crosswell Fire Station in honor of Alvin Lee Duncan be recommended to County Council for approval. Motion was seconded by Mr. Hamilton. Motion passed unanimously.


Commissioners and Staff Discussion

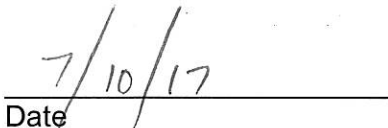
Staff reminded Mr. Nation and Mr. Hamilton of their upcoming orientation training. Mr. Nation attending training in Walhalla on June 21st and Mr. Hamilton attending training at the ACOG offices in Greenville on June 27th.

Adjourn

There being no additional matters to be taken up by the Commission, Mr. Ballentine motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Motion was seconded by Mr. Young. Meeting was adjourned at 8:32pm.

Submitted by:


Secretary


Date

Approved by:

Wm W. Cato
Chairman

07/10/2017
Date

June 12, 2017

Pickens County Planning Commission
222 McDaniel Avenue, B-10
Pickens, SC 29671



Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am writing to share my concerns regarding the proposed Summit at Glassy development and urge the Planning Commission to delay or carefully consider its vote on item SD-17-004. It should come as no surprise to the Commission that Glassy Mountain and its surroundings are cherished by those who know them. It is no coincidence that a photographed view from atop the mountain, looking out over a pastoral land along North Glassy Mountain Road, graces the cover of the Planning Commission Recommended 2030 Pickens County Comprehensive Plan. In his bestselling memoir *Red Hills and Cotton*, Ben Robertson pins Glassy Mountain as the landmark by which the rising sun hovers in the east. Like Robertson, I could wax poetic (though not as eloquently) for pages about the land around Glassy Mountain. But, suffice it to say, I was born and raised on the western slope of the mountain and no physical place affords more meaning.

Again like Robertson, I left the environs of Glassy after high school to attend Clemson University and pursue a degree in architecture. It was there that I was taught design not only at the scale of a solitary building and its immediate surroundings but at the scale of an entire neighborhood, community, and city. In light of that, I would be remiss not to acknowledge that my own profession and vocation relies upon the thoughtful expansion of the built environment. Growth in Pickens County is inevitable and will be a certain boon if dealt with carefully. Though it would thrill me to see the property at hand be wholly preserved, I am not naïve. However, I cannot condone or support the current Summit at Glassy's high density and cluster development approach.

By simply looking at an aerial of the proposed Summit at Glassy development, it is straightforward to see that a development of such density and size is unprecedented in the Pickens area. One has to go east of White Horse Road into Greenville County or south of Easley to encounter the size and concentration of development offered by the current layout. I fear that by allowing the development to move forward as is will set a dangerous precedent – setting up Highway 183 from Dacusville to Pickens as a Greenville sprawl corridor. Cluster development can and does work well in closer proximity to urban settings. However, in rural areas, cluster developments made up of miniscule lots with homes packed in, even when an attempt is made to preserve large parcels of land, “have generally failed miserably to produce their intended results”. This is the conclusion of renowned planner, site designer, and author Randall Arendt, whose most recent title is *Rural by Design – Planning for Town and Country*.

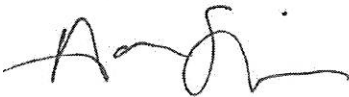
Further, I find the land use application submitted for the Summit at Glassy to be misleading. The first question posed on the application asks whether the proposed use is consistent with other uses in the area or the general development patterns occurring in the area. The given response is simply ‘Yes, Residential.’ I would submit the honest response as a resounding ‘no’, simply for reasons of density and numbers mentioned previously. Despite claims of vast land conservation within the development, one need only glance at the site plan to see that much of the preserved land consists of slender strips between home lots and the small, disconnected portions where a clean lot will not overlay. In short,

much of the 'preserved' land appears as convenient leftovers. Additionally, the renderings offered as potential homes to fill the development are presented as sprawling mountain estates surrounded by extensive landscaping and forestland. The reality of the proposed layout suggests room for relatively narrow homes (all 254 of them) just feet from one another.

The trend of development from Dacusville into Pickens will undoubtedly soar in the coming years as Greenville and the Upstate face continued growth. A case study of the Sovereign Oaks development in Buncombe County, NC offers me hope with regard to the decisions to be made concerning the Summit at Glassy. In the case of Sovereign Oaks, a series of community and planning meetings led the developer to reduce the unit total of a cluster development on previously rural agricultural land by 75%. This altruistic approach came partly as a result of the developer truly understanding the constituency surrounding the area to be developed and not simply dismissing them as naysayers. As a Clemson graduate, the phrases 'there's something in these hills' and 'where the Blue Ridge yawns its greatness' strike a chord in my spirit whenever they are sung or uttered. I hope the Planning Commission and Mr. Findley, a fellow Clemson graduate, will not take for granted what is in these hills and pursue a plan that sets an admirable precedent, agreeable to the land and the people.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Swiger', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Aaron Swiger, Assoc. AIA

Rec'd
6/12/17
8:00am
ST PC
mtg

Statement: The proposed development near Glassy Mountain would be a mistake for Pickens County

Andrea Cooper, Executive Director, Upstate Forever

The following remarks were prepared for the Pickens County Planning Commission Meeting on June 12, 2017, 6:30 p.m. The meeting will focus on the suitability of a proposed 254-unit subdivision on the side of Glassy Mountain.

My name is Andrea Cooper. I am the Executive Director at Upstate Forever. Upstate Forever is a conservation organization that works to protect the critical lands, water quality and unique character of the 10-county Upstate region. During our nearly 20 years protecting special places in the Upstate, we have learned one key lesson. Once an iconic natural feature is lost – or its integrity degraded – it is lost forever. In other words, there are many places throughout the county to build homes. There is only one Glassy Mountain.

As you likely have learned during your tenure on the commission, not many developments cause this much of a public outcry. So why is this one different? The answer is simple – because of the real threat it poses to Glassy Mountain – an iconic community resource -- one which generations of Pickens County residents have enjoyed and identified with for a very long time.

The Planning Commission's job tonight is to balance the interests of the community -- all the people in this room -- against the rights of a few individual property owners who are unwilling to consider other options that would still give them a financial return but would also balance the community and natural aspects of the area. It is clear what the property owners have to gain if this transaction moves forward. Let's consider what the community has to lose.

First off, there is no question that this development would negatively impact Glassy Mountain. The Glassy Mountain Heritage Trust Preserve is much more than just a rock outcropping – it is a protected area that hosts several rare and threatened plant species and provides critical habitat to wildlife. The large, intact land parcels that surround it act as a buffer. The proposed 250+ home subdivision is one of those critical buffer areas. If developed -- especially at the scale proposed -- there could be devastating impacts to the nearby natural resources. Similarly, this is a landscape that Pickens County residents cherish. The proposed development -- at its massive scale -- would adversely impact that landscape dramatically and forever.

Secondly, the proposed development is inconsistent with other uses and development patterns in the area. Let's also consider the recently adopted Pickens County Comprehensive Plan and whether this proposed development is truly compatible with the vision laid out within it. The plan is a reflection of community input and values and truly the best means Pickens County citizens

and leaders have to shape growth in their own local communities. The proposed development falls within a character area on the future land use map referred to as Rural Residential, an area that, according to the plan, "intends to maintain an agrarian character in outlying areas which include active, mostly small-scale, farming operations and large homes sites." Clearly, this proposed development does NOT fall in line with the spirit of what was intended for this area of the county.

Finally, there have been suggestions that this development will be a good investment for Pickens County and its citizens. In nearly all cases, however, residential development is a loser for local governments in terms of return on investment because it costs more to support with services – roads, fire and police protection, etc. - than it generates in taxes. In other words, the idea that this development will be a boon for the county in terms of taxes largely ignores the fact that the development will need to be served by the county for the long term.

The proposed application under review specifically asks whether the proposed development will cause an "excessive or burdensome use" of public facilities or services, including streets, schools, water or sewer facilities and police & fire protection, etc. The answer provided by the developer addresses drinking water only. What about all the other services the new residents of this development will demand? For example, as proposed, the community septic tanks and roadways, while not an issue to the County tax bill initially, could quite likely become an issue down the line when/if the homeowner's association cannot pay for repairs.

Also, speaking of property taxes, if this subdivision is approved, tax rates for surrounding homeowners will likely increase with the additional 250 homes with the valuation goal of \$400K. What will that mean for those landowners -- quite possibly that they could be forced off their land and/or feel pressured to sell to the next willing developer -- exacerbating the threat to Glassy Mountain. Speaking of home values, I think a relevant question to ask is - to what extent has a market study been conducted? It would be a shame to cut trees and pave roads to find out that the market does not exist. Across the southeast, these rural types of developments for older home buyers are struggling because of rapidly changing demographics.

In closing, let me assure you that Upstate Forever rarely opposes specific developments. The stakes with this proposal, however, are just too high for us to ignore. When the rights and gains of a few individuals are at the expense of the larger community, there is clearly a conflict. When an iconic natural resource is threatened, we cannot stand by idly and say nothing. In making your decision tonight, I implore you to consider what the community stands to lose if this development is allowed to proceed as proposed. Thank you for your service to Pickens County.

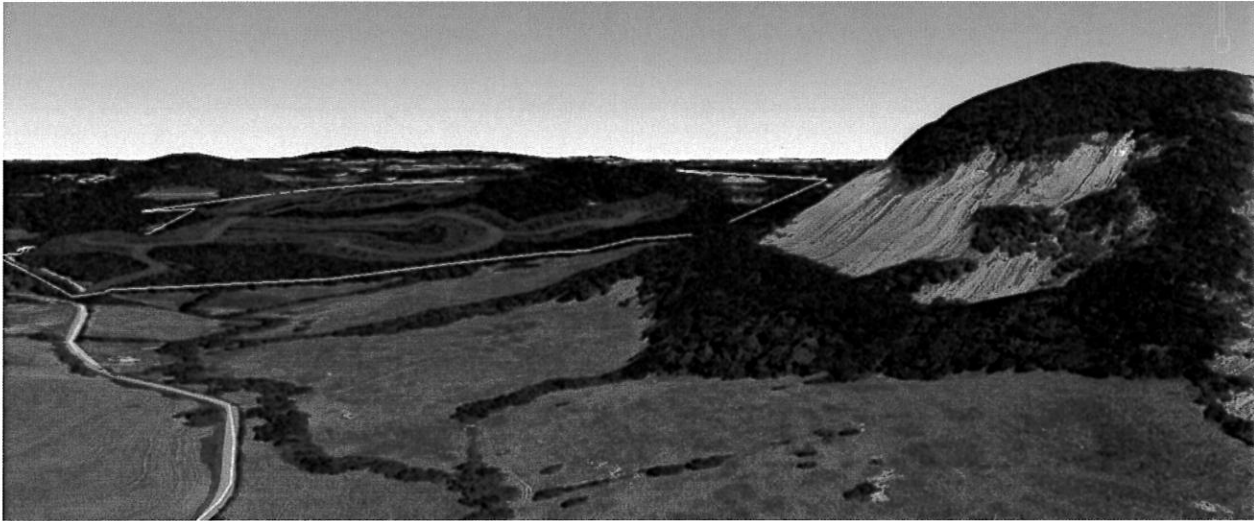
For additional questions, please contact:

Andrea Cooper

Executive Director

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This image depicts the outline of where the proposed development would lie in relation to Glassy Mountain.



This image shows the current view from Glassy Mountain over the land that is slated for development.