

## **Planning Commission to present amendment proposal to council**

April 30, 2008

By Naaem McFadden  
Florence Morning News

The Marion County Planning Commission voted to approve a proposed zoning ordinance amendment to be submitted as a recommendation to the Marion County Council, regarding mining and extraction operations.

The Commission met Monday night for a public hearing to discuss the changes to Section 5-8 of the Marion County Zoning Ordinance. However, no members of the public attended.

Commission Chairman Edwin Stephens ran down a list of concerns of the Commission and addressed the issue of how to regulate mining operations.

Stephens said the Commission was given the task by County Council in February to help resolve the issue of the large number of sand mining companies doing business in the southern part of the county.

“The concerns that were voiced to us by the council was ... that mining operations were becoming more and more, and we needed additional regulations on this particular type of operation,” he said.

A lot of soil and sand is being removed he said, adding that reclamation plans and prevention to insure that mass erosion doesn't occur and other concerns would become a larger issue. After a Feb. 27 joint meeting between County Council and the Planning Commission, members learned what the top priorities are for the group.

Sand mining operations, regulations for the industrial park and making plans for the development along the I-73 corridor are some of the items at the top of the list, he said. Stephens said Dorchester County has been a valuable help in drafting a proposal regarding the sand mining. He added that county officials said they have some of the same issues and concerns, particularly when it comes to the wear and tear on county roads by the trucks. The Commission is expected to report to council with its recommendations within 60 days.

According to a copy of the zoning ordinance amendment, the new section included says, “mining is hereby defined by using the same terms and meanings as set forth by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control,” the extracting of ores or mineral solids in the regular operation of business whether by breaking the soil surface or removing deposits lying exposed in their natural state falls under the ordinance. Senior Planner Levonne Powell said there are several mining operations in the county, with about 12 permitted.

“We did not dream this up,” Stephens said of the newly developed section that will be submitted to council. Commission members credited Stephens for composing the replacement to the existing provisions.

Marion County has received a number of mining requests during the past few months. Powell explained that the moratorium placed by Horry County is one reason why so many companies are now mining in Marion County.

“We have come up with what we think is a very workable document, which would be an annex to the current zoning ordinance,” Stephens said. Stephens said the task was a doable task because everyone on the Commission pulls together and understands the guidance from council.