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City Council has full plate tonight

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Oak Ridge City Council members tonight are expected to elect from their own ranks a mayor pro tem.

The mayor pro tem fills in for the mayor when that official is temporarily absent.

Council members will also appoint seven members of an Oak Ridge Charter Review Committee that will ensure the document is consistent with state law.

Meanwhile, an international grocer, Aldi Inc., has asked to withdraw a resolution that would have granted access off Oak Ridge Turnpike and Florida Avenue for a new discount grocery in east Oak Ridge.

The seven-member Council tried to elect a mayor pro tem during last month's meeting, following the June 5 municipal election, but a series of five separate votes all ended in 3-3 ties split between the two candidates, Council members Jane Miller and David Mosby.

However, Council members did elect Councilman Tom Beehan as mayor during that meeting — even though he was absent. Beehan is expected to break the tie tonight; he has said he plans to vote for Miller.

Beehan had been mayor pro tem.

Regarding the Charter Review Committee, 13 people have submitted applications to serve.

The revised Oak Ridge city charter approved by voters in 2004 calls for the committee review every eight years, beginning this July.

The committee applicants are:

- Robert D. Baker
- Thomas P. Burns
- R. Boyd Carter
- Karen G. Crutchfield
- Ella H. DuBose
- Patricia M. Fain
- Jonathan Forstrom
- Virginia M. Jones
- D. Tom Normand

- Mary Helen Rose
- Phil Wallace
- Aaron Wells
- Janet Westbrook.

Besides ensuring the charter is consistent with state law, the Review Committee can also recommend other changes that it believes are in the community's best interest.

The Charter Review Committee will submit proposed amendments to Council within 10 months of the committee appointments. City Council members will then consider the recommendations and submit to a voter referendum those amendments the Council deems appropriate.

Regarding the grocery store, Jesse Anesi, an Aldi Inc. real estate director in Gladeville, Tenn., said the company has terminated its contract to purchase the east Oak Ridge property "due to numerous site issues and approvals that did not meet with the corporate office approval process."

"Hopefully, Aldi can find another location in Oak Ridge that meets our needs," Anesi said in a July 12 letter to Oak Ridge Community Development Director Kathryn Baldwin.

Aldi had planned to develop about 2.6 acres at the corner of Florida Avenue and Oak Ridge Turnpike.

Baldwin said there is a lot of rock on the site and some big drainage pipes that would have to be relocated, adding significant expenses to the project.

Despite some neighborhood opposition, the Oak Ridge Municipal Planning Commission had already approved a site plan for a 17,000 square foot Aldi discount grocery store on the property.

Also tonight, Council members will consider a resolution to pay half the cost — up to \$2,500 a month — of leasing the former Oak Ridge Utility District building on Oak Ridge Turnpike in order to keep Anderson County's General Sessions Court Division II in Oak Ridge. The county would pay the other half of the \$5,000-a-month lease.

Officials say the current court, located in the Oak Ridge Municipal Building, is overcrowded and has inadequate security.

Council's regular meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Courtroom.

The meeting will be preceded by a 6:45 p.m. non-voting work session where officials will discuss a new financing proposal for the Crestpointe of Oak Ridge retail project atop Pine Ridge.

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