6 vie for Oconee airport contract

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WALHALLA — Oconee County's search for an airport engineering consultant is picking up steam.

Procurement Director Robyn Courtright announced Thursday the names of six firms vying to take over engineering duties from Talbert & Bright Inc.

TBI fell from favor after one of its engineers faked a state permit that paralyzed a runway extension project at Oconee County Regional Airport last year.

A U.S. District Court convicted former TBI engineer Marty Wynn last month of federal fraud charges in connection with the ruse with the airport permit.

Plateau Excavation Inc., the contractor on the $4.8 million runway project, filed a lawsuit against Oconee County last month that seeks almost $2 million in damages.

Plateau claims it suffered losses because TBI, acting as the county's agent, had the company keep workers and equipment on standby while the runway project was shut down.

Courtright said the six firms that responded to the county's request for qualifications are ADC Engineering, of Hanahan, S.C.; Avcan Inc. of Orlando, Fla.; Delta Airport Consultants of Charlotte, N.C.; and Dennis Corp., LPA Group and W.K. Dickson, of Columbia, S.C.

Dickson has done engineering work in Oconee on behalf of the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority.

TBI has monopolized lucrative aviation projects in Oconee since 1990. Over the past 20 years, the company has handled more than $11 million in federally funded projects.

The runway extension, which was completed last month, gives the local airport a 5,000-foot landing and takeoff strip that will accommodate larger corporate jets for the first time.

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