

# Airport lawsuit mediation fails

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WALHALLA — A \$2 million lawsuit against Oconee County related to a runway extension project at the local airport is not going away any time soon.

Two days of mediation to settle the three-party lawsuit failed to produce a deal Thursday, Oconee's attorney Benjamin "Ned" Nicholson said.

"The mediation has adjourned and there has been no settlement after two days of hard work by all parties," Nicholson said.

Plateau Excavation Inc., the general

contractor on the runway project, sued Oconee on May 9, 2011, claiming breach of contract.

Plateau alleges that Oconee's consulting engineer, Talbert & Bright Inc., halted the job, causing the contractor to suffer losses by having to keep people and equipment on standby.

Subsequently, Oconee filed a counterclaim against Talbert & Bright alleging professional malpractice and negligence.

A Talbert & Bright engineer who oversaw the runway project was convicted of federal charges last year for falsifying a state permit. When state

regulators learned that the permit was forged, they temporarily stopped the project.

Nicholson said the parties agreed to continue to negotiate "as certain legal matters are investigated." He said court rules prohibit him from discussing the matter further because of the confidential nature of mediation.

The Federal Aviation Administration picked up 95 percent of the almost \$5 million runway and taxiway project. The extension gave the airport 5,000 total feet of runway.

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**A plane lands Thursday on the recently completed extended runway at the Oconee County Regional Airport. A second day of mediation to settle a lawsuit related to the runway proved unsuccessful.**