

# Airport's bid for more

## Oconee County Council OKs \$150,000 in local

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**WALHALLA** — The Oconee County Airport is on the go with plans to increase T-hangar space.

Airport Director Kevin Short received a nod from Oconee County Council this week for a request of \$150,000 in his 2009-10 budget that's earmarked for

the purchase of 11.2 acres on the south side of Airport Road near Seneca. Short said the land would be used for T-hangars.

Short convinced council members on the expenditure in a very tight budget year with the argument that the Federal Aviation Administration would reimburse 95 percent of the \$150,000. He also pointed out that having more hangars

would bring in more tenants, increase lease revenue and generate more flights, which is one of the criteria the FAA uses in dishing out federal grants.

Short was not through. He then asked council's permission to shift \$17,500 from the \$150,000 approved for the land purchase to complete more than \$100,000 needed to proceed with a

# hangars on track

## hub's budget to buy 11.2 acres for expansion

\$5.3 million runway extension project. The 600-foot extension would give the airport 5,000 feet of runway, which complies with FAA safety standards.

Federal regulations require a 5,000-foot runway for planes to land during inclement weather.

Council went along with Short's suggestion, but wondered whether the land he

intended to buy with the \$150,000 had gone down in value.

Short admitted that the land-purchase money included a rather liberal estimate for attorney fees.

Hangar space is becoming big business for small rural airports around the country.

Industry analysts say that global demands on businesses have made access to a local

airport increasingly important. On the flip side, local governments see the worth of an airport with available corporate hangars that could convince new businesses to relocate to the area.

According to the state Division of Aeronautics, the Oconee County Airport generates \$6.3 million to the local economy, including more than 100 jobs.