Broadband moving closer to reality in Oconee County

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WALHALLA — Countywide broadband Internet is moving closer to reality in Oconee County.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said construction of the infrastructure for the broadband system is scheduled to be complete by the end of March. After that, testing on the equipment will be done in April and May, giving the county time to fix any issues by July 31. Grants which paid for the nearly $15 million project called for its completion by the end of July, Moulder said.

County Council approved the expenditure of $181,843.20 for the third phase of installation by Network Controls and Electric of Greer on Tuesday night. Moulder said that money will likely cover the final costs of construction.

Moulder said Internet providers will likely have access to broadband infrastructure by July. The county will not be providing Internet service directly to residents, but will provide access to private companies who will pay a fee to the county and offer service to residential and business customers. No decision has been made what companies will provide Internet access to customers or the cost.

Many of the fire stations in Oconee County already have Internet access through the broadband system and Moulder said all fire stations will have the system in place before July.

In other business Tuesday, the council approved $153,890 for the construction of a tower and building for Long Mountain. Moulder said the project will include a 160-foot self-supporting communications tower and a 10-foot by 12-foot prefabricated electronic equipment building at the Lake Mountain communication site. K-Co Enterprises of Pelzer was chosen to do the work.

The council also voted to sell two homes near the Oconee County Airport. The homes will be sold in a sealed bid process and the buyers will be required to move the homes. Councilman Archie Barron, chairman of the council's Real Estate, Facilities and Land Management Committee, said the action will give the airport more land. One of the two homes is currently vacant and Moulder said the tenant in the other home will be given up to three months to find another place to live.

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