

Broadband work may cost \$1M more

Changes would add 20 miles to project's first phase

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WALHALLA — The first phase of Oconee County's broadband project could be expanded to the tune of almost \$1 million.

Oconee County Council will be asked to approve a change order of \$952,337 at tonight's regular meeting.

The change in plans would add 20 miles to the original 95 miles contemplated in the first phase of the project that was awarded to Network Controls and Electric Inc. of Greer for \$2.7 million on Aug. 8, 2011.

Network Controls was to have completed installing conduit and fiber optic for the first 95 miles of the project by Feb. 15. The change extends the completion date to March 30.

The total cost of the change order includes \$40,000 for contingency.

On Monday, the Procurement Office issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the second phase of the project that would add an additional 96 miles to the proposed 270-mile fiber optic network.

The second phase is to be completed by Nov. 15.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration awarded Oconee a \$9.6 million broadband grant in the summer of 2010. The NTIA grant will cover work completed by April 2013.

According to background information provided with tonight's request, the work and cost associated with the change order would be covered in the original grant application.

Under the terms of the federal grant, \$4.5 million in matching funds must be added to the project.

Also on tonight's agenda is council's final decision on the Cane Creek rezoning request that takes in more than 1,000 properties.

A group of property owners on South Cove Road that has been dragged into the Cane Creek petition is asking council to be zoned Traditional Rural District.

Under the Cane Creek petition, those property owners would be zoned Agricultural Residential District, a classification they do not want.

Lilly Davis, one of the TRD petitioners, said at the previous council meeting that she would consider a lawsuit if council denies her request.

The county and several individual council members already are caught in a zoning lawsuit filed last year related to a different Cane Creek petition.

Council also is scheduled to consider a fee in lieu of a tax agreement with an unidentified company code named Project Sunshine. The company would make a capital investment of \$25 million over five years under the terms of the agreement.

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