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Council unveils county boss finalists

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WALHALLA — Confident they will be able to select a new Oconee County administrator from among four finalists for the job, County Council members unanimously released the names of the remaining candidates on Tuesday night.

In so doing, Council Chairman Reg Dexter slammed media reports that the four candidates were inept and that a new search should begin anew from scratch.

Also, Councilman Wayne McCall appeared to back pedal from derogatory comments he made over the weekend about the four candidates by voting along with the other councilmen in releasing the names of finalists and moving forward with background checks.

The action was taken after the council retreated briefly into executive session midway through its meeting to discuss



Dexter

legal issues and personnel matters.

Before releasing the candidates' names, Dexter said he contacted the four candidates because of recent media reports in which McCall called the field of candidates a bucket of "bad apples," and saying two had serious background liabilities that included sexual harassment.

"Not one of these candidates in any way, shape or form have anything to do with what was reported in the media," Dexter said.

Dexter said there was nothing about any of the candidates being sex offenders or that their resumes were blotched with grammatical or spelling mistakes.

McCall went out of his way to support Dexter.

"What he's saying is 100 percent true," McCall said. "These are the top picks."

The finalists were identified as Walter Munchheimer, a director of Financial Management in Palm Beach County in Florida; Hal Mason of Garner, N.C., who has 11 years of experience as a city manager and assistant city manager; Leonard Sossamon of Concord, N.C., who has 20 years of experience, including two as county administrator in Newberry; and Mark Watson of Waxhaw, N.C., who has 15 years of administrative experience in Union County government.

Although state law does not require the council to disclose a candidate's identity until there are at least three finalists, Dexter said the decision was made to identify the four because members had difficulty eliminating any of the four.