Councilman: Oconee doesn't want to be in broadband biz

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THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Oconee has been unsuccessful trying to find a private business to come in and operate the county's almost $15 million broadband system and is facing challenges trying to price Internet services, an elected official said.

Councilman Paul Corbeil told a Seneca tea party crowd this week the county does not want to be in the broadband business. The terms of the $9.6 million grant Oconee received from the federal government call on the county to keep ownership of the system for a period of time.

"We can't sell it for another seven or eight more years," Corbeil said. "But we do not want to be in the broad

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band business long term, I'll tell you that."

Corbeil said the county would like to bring someone in to operate the system under an "outsource agreement."

"We have to pay somebody to do it who is in that business," Corbeil said.

One person in the audience asked Corbeil how many broadband customers the county has on the system.

"Very few," Corbeil said, eliciting some snickers.

Someone else said the service is too expensive.

"There is a real challenge out there in terms of pricing the product in terms of connectivity and ongoing services that we've got to figure out with the community and the vendors," Corbeil admitted.

Local tea party leader Randy Simpson said satellite companies are providing as good or better Internet service than the wire service providers.

"My satellite Internet is faster than many who are wired up," Simpson said.

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