County to dish $200K on broadband

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WALHALLA — Oconee County is renewing a maintenance services contract with a North Carolina-based company for an amount not to exceed $200,000.

The contract for GeoVision Services Inc. of Sylva, N.C., is included on the agenda of the county council meeting tonight. The contract will run through June 30, 2015.

Services provided by GeoVision include fiber testing and trouble-shooting, engineering, and permitting and egress for new installations.

GeoVision undertook 26 projects in fiscal 2013-14 for the county at a cost of $159,110.28, according to information compiled by the procurement office.

In making a favorable recommendation to continue using the services of GeoVision, procurement officials reported the county "has been satisfied with GeoVision's construction services."

Procurement added the majority of construction services work to be handled by GeoVision "will be reimbursed by broadband customers."

The contract surfaces as some Internet service providers doing business with the county delivering end-user connections from the county's broadband network to homes and businesses have expressed concerns about the county's business model.

Some providers, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told The Journal they have struggled with the way the county is operating. They said installation costs for individuals, which could run as much as $3,000, are pricing too many out.

"They're going to have to work on the cost of installation, because it's too expensive for individuals," one provider said.

Others complained that when they get calls from customers wanting to get a quote for service, the county is frequently slow getting back to them with the information.

Some providers told The Journal that few people are getting hooked up to the county's broadband network, yet others say they are generating business.

County administrator Scott Moulder declined to comment on the concerns raised by the Internet service providers.

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