

Economic Development

Oconee County boss signals 'significant changes'

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County Administrator Scott Moulder is signaling that "significant changes" to the Economic Development Department are imminent.

Moulder made the comment when asked by The Journal on

Monday when he expects to fill a new Economic Development position that's included in the current budget.

Moulder indicated that the changes coming might not "include a new job posting."

"There will be significant changes (in economic development) in the near future," Moulder

said. "I don't think they're the type of changes people are expecting. I can't tell you what, but it'll be known in the very near future."

Economic Development Director Jim Alexander said Monday that it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that at age 74, he's ready to retire.

"I've spent 30 years in the Air Force and 20 years doing this type of work," Alexander said.

Alexander directed economic development at Sumter County for more than eight years and is coming up on 12 years doing the same in Oconee.

SEE OVERHAUL, PAGE A5

overhaul likely



TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2011

OVERHAUL: 'We should never be satisfied'

FROM PAGE A1

Alexander indicated he would retire "one of these days," but when pressed for a specific time frame, he said "that's up to the boss."

Moulder and Oconee County Council made jobs and job retention their top strategic priority this year, but few jobs are finding their way into Oconee.

In April, county and state officials announced that CollinsCraft, a fiberglass and composite manufacturer was making a multi-million investment

to expand its operations in Westminster, which would create 20 new jobs over five years.

On Jan. 20, Altera Polymers LLC, a producer of recycled plastics and engineered resin, announced a \$4 million investment at the former Propex plant in Seneca that would create 75 jobs over five years.

Oconee's job-producing numbers this year are dwarfed in comparison to the 2,583 jobs created in the Upstate by companies that have invested more than \$174 million, according to figures from the

South Carolina Department of Commerce.

Most of the economic development activity in the Upstate has centered on Greenville (1,453 jobs on \$83.5 million worth of investments) and Spartanburg (680 jobs on \$46.4 million of investments).

Moulder said Oconee is thankful for the companies that have relocated and expanded their businesses this year.

"Jobs is something we should focus on from here on out," Moulder said. "We should never be satisfied with our efforts. We

should always be trying to improve these numbers."

Alexander said there are three companies interested in the \$1.5 million spec building the county has for lease or sale at the Highway 11 Commerce Center near Westminster.

County officials are hoping to attract new jobs with the development of the Golden Corner Commerce Park in Fair Play and the Echo Hills industrial site on Highway 11, but both projects still lack vital infrastructure.

carlos@dailyjournal.com | (864) 973-6685