

Economic development office to oversee Destination Oconee

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WALHALLA — Council voted Tuesday to assign oversight of Destination Oconee to the county's economic development office, though some members argued it might be

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cities of Seneca, Walhalla and Westminster.

The 3-2 vote was opposed by councilwoman Edda Cammick and chairman Wayne McCall, both of whom maintained Oconee should put the county's Parks, Recreation and Tourism department or the Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau in charge.

"Destination Oconee is the PRT (and) CVB's little red wagon, and they need to deal with it," Cammick said.

Councilman Paul Cain said the position was an already-funded position in the OEA, which deals with many of the commercial businesses that would implement the "rustic elegance" guidelines set forth by Destination Oconee.

"We're simply adding additional duties and responsibilities to the person who would fill that role," Cain said.

McCall said the problem is the salary for the position was included in the county's operating budget.

But member Reg Dexter argued the position would be filled regardless of whether its responsibilities included Destination Oconee oversight.

County administrator Scott Moulder said the job had previously included "typical administrative work," and the idea was to add responsibility to an existing role in order to "kill two birds with one stone."

Moulder said the office had managed for approximately two months without the position being filled

better placed elsewhere.

An action item authorized administrator Scott Moulder to fill an open position at the Oconee Economic Alliance with the intent of making the person hired responsible for working with a committee to coordinate and implement the plan.

"Well, I would suggest we continue to manage without it," Cammick said.

The OEA has three employees — a marketing position and a project manager, along with executive director Richard Blackwell — in addition to the open position.

Cammick said she did not mind Blackwell being allowed to fill the position, but still maintained Destination Oconee should be "a PRT/CVB issue."

McCall said putting the OEA in charge of Destination Oconee was tantamount to "muddying the waters."

But Moulder explained that voting against the action item would not only mean that council was not approving the Destination

Destination Oconee was created along with the S.C. National Heritage Corridor and seeks to capitalize on the area's natural attractions by outlining a cohesive tourism-marketing plan between the county and

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Oconee oversight, it would also cut an established position from an already-overworked office.

Moulder argued that the OEA was a sensible department to handle the Destination Oconee plan since it worked directly with the businesses that would be asked to comply with its guidelines.

"It has everything to do with the Oconee Economic Alliance's initiative," he said. "If you go back and look at the community development component of the alliance, you'll recognize there's private investment involvement in the overall community development of Oconee County that incorporates more than just manufacturing."

A second part of the ac-

tion item allowed council to begin accepting applications for a seven-member action plan committee (one per district and two at-large members) for Destination Oconee, and that portion passed unanimously.

Moulder told The Journal on Wednesday that he did not yet have an official title or a salary range for the position, but said it would not remain an office manager role.

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