Economic developments



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

The construction of the TDC Overseas campus at the intersection of U.S. Highway 123 and Davis Creek Road in Seneca is on track to be completed at "the end of summer or kind of that first part of fall," according to Oconee Economic Alliance executive director Richard Blackwell. The campus will include a 32,000-square-foot office building and a 10,000-square-foot recycling center added to the existing 168,000-square-foot facility.

BorgWarner planning another expansion

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — After two expansions totaling almost $50 million over the past three years, BorgWarner has another announcement of a new investment and new jobs in the works.

The first reading in title only of an ordinance to modify an existing fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement with Borg Warner Torque Transfer Systems Inc. is one of two economic development matters on the agenda for tonight's meeting of Oconee County Council.

The other is second reading of an ordinance authorizing an amended fee agreement with Greenfield Industries Inc., which is in the process of constructing its new TDC Overseas campus at the intersection of U.S. Highway 123 and Davis Creek Road in Seneca.

For BorgWarner, Ordinance 2015-11 is designed to clarify its existing FILOT deal with the county in order to pave the way for an additional investment in "another few weeks to maybe a month and a half," according to Oconee Economic Alliance executive director Richard Blackwell.

"It is essentially a fee agreement with BorgWarner that will basically clean up some issues with their past fees, so that their new management team, the county auditor — everybody is straight on what BorgWarner's fee is detailing," Blackwell told The Journal last week. "So it cleans that up and gets it straight,

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but it also has another element to welcome this new investment the company is making in Oconee County and the new jobs that they are going to announce in the next six to eight weeks."

BorgWarner, a global leader in powertrain technology, announced plans in 2012 to add 30 jobs to its Seneca manufacturing operation and agreed to invest at least $25 million in new taxable property at the site, and another announcement followed in 2013 with an investment of $24.6 million and 105 new jobs.

As for Greenfield Industries, Ordinance 2015-05 won't lead to any announcements, Blackwell said, but is designed to ensure all its subsidiaries that are represented at the Davis Creek Road site can take advantage of its existing FILOT agreement.

"There's about 10 subsidiaries right there on that site ... and they just want to make sure that as they grow and as they reach the capital investments they've promised to the county and the state, that they're able to take advantage of these different subsidiaries growing over time and having the jobs associated," he said.

China-based TDC Cutting Tools announced last summer it would invest $8.2 million to establish its overseas headquarters at the same site as its subsidiary, Greenfield Industries.

The new TDC Overseas campus will include a 32,000-square-foot office building and a 10,000-square-foot recycling center added to the existing 168,000-square-foot facility. The expansion is expected to create 38 jobs in Seneca.

Blackwell said Greenfield told him last month it was looking at "the end of summer or kind of that first part of fall" to complete the project.

"They are throwing up steel, and that thing's taking shape pretty quickly," Blackwell said. "It is exciting to see that. Every day there is something new with that project."

As for the county's other economic development projects that are currently in the works or already underway, Blackwell gave updates on Michelin, Casto Southeast and ACI Plastics.

Blackwell said the county is in "wait-and-see" mode with Michelin, but is expecting the company to solidify an agreement to create at least 30 full-time jobs and invest at least $175 million, which could be up to $250 million by its completion, at the Golden Corner Commerce Park near Fair Play.

"Within the next 30 days, for sure, we will know exactly what the company is going to do," Blackwell said. "We don't anticipate a decision going south. We anticipate that decision being made just like they've told us and told council and stood up before everybody and said,

at council meeting tonight

'This is what we're contemplating.' But they do need an official signature to move forward, and we're hoping we get that any day now."



Blackwell

Casto Southeast Realty plans to build a $30 million multi-use development at the site of the old Milliken plant in eastern Oconee County that would yield up to 300 new jobs.

The commercial development would be located along the frontage of U.S. Highway 123 and S. C. Highway 93 and would establish about 300,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space.

Blackwell said council will continue to work at its second meeting in February on that agreement with the company to help with infrastructure enhancements for the company "in that corridor," the area of the county — where Greenfield Industries is also located — near its border with Clemson.

"It's not just that developer or that property; it's going to help that entire corridor with some infrastructure," Blackwell said. "As Greenfield has grown, there's potential growth around the Food Lion. ... That whole area is going to change over the next one to 20 years, so we need to get ahead of that growth, and the county is looking to assist with some infrastructure enhancements in that area."

Finally, Blackwell said ACI Plastics, just outside of the city limits in Westminster, is in the process of making the building suitable to its needs. The company currently has an existing operation in Anderson it is working to move to the bigger space in Oconee.

"They're not in as much of a hurry as Greenfield, but certainly they are working on that project little by little," he said.

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