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Fire substations in Oconee's plans

Officials hope it would lead to lower ISO ratings

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Oconee County's Emergency Services Department is looking to establish fire substations at various locations to expand services and help lower ISO ratings.

The plan recently received a boost with an offer for a free piece of property to establish a rural fire substation at Foxwood Hills in northwest Oconee County.

The Foxwood Hills Property Owners Association (POA) voted unanimously in favor of making the standing offer of land to the county, Emergency Services Director Rodney Burdette told a County Council committee this week.

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Burdette said the parcel is approximately 200 feet by 147 feet and would be large enough space for a two-bay metal building to house two fire trucks. He said the corner piece of property has all the utilities needed for a substation.

County Council Chairman Reg Dexter, who sat in the audience during the Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee meeting chaired by Wayne McCall, asked Burdette where the trucks and pumpers would come from to use at the proposed substation. Burdette said the county has spare pumpers, but not tankers.

Council Vice Chairman Joel Thrift, who sits on the committee, asked Burdette to come back with a cost estimate for putting a building on the property.

Burdette said having firefighting equipment on land offered by Foxwood Hills would be a first step at trying to lower the ISO rating, which he said is high in the area.

Jess Neville represented the Emergency Services Commission at Wednesday night's meeting. He said other areas have been identified throughout the county where substations could also help lower the ISO rating. Among the potential sites identified is a county facility at Holly Springs and U.S. 76, and another site on Whetstone Road that has been donated to Mountain Rest.

Burdette said a proposal made to Duke Energy to have a building at South Cove Park would have to wait until 2016, when Duke's relicensing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is completed. In the meantime, he said he is looking at alternative sites, including one on Sheep Farm Road.

carlos@dailyjm.com