It's official: Seneca owns Lunney Museum

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SENECA — After a year of going through requisite legal processes, the city of Seneca is now the proud owner of the Lunney Museum on 211 W.S. First St.

City Attorney Michael Smith officially handed Mayor Dan Alexander the deed to the property Tuesday night during the Seneca City Council meeting to a round of applause, almost exactly a year after the council initially voted to purchase the landmark for $45,000.

"We are very happy that we are the new owners of the Lunney House

Museum," City Administrator Greg Dietterick said. "We feel it is very important to preserve our city history for future generations."

The process was easy at first, as a title search to ensure there were no other heirs to the property came up empty. The city reached a legal obstacle, however, as talks between the county, the city and the rightful heir, Charles Finley, resulted in questions regarding the deed.

Oconee County cut all funding to the Lunney in 2007, leaving the landmark museum in a precarious position. The Lunney Museum board appealed to the city to take over funding for its operations in January 2008.

While a reverter clause stating if the county did not utilize or fund it, it would return back to Finley was in the original deed when the county took the property, a later deed did not have any such statement, making the original deed ineffective.

The county then passed an ordinance allowing the county to give the building back to Finley on the condition it be sold to Seneca, which he has now done.

Now the city must decide how the Lunney will function under its new ownership. A get-together involving museum board members and city officials has been scheduled to discuss such items.

"We are currently planning an open house at the museum on July 21," Dietterick said. "Invitations and details are being formalized in the coming week."