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Moulder: Tax software data corrupt

Faulty system forces Oconee to spend $90K more for reassessment

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Oconee County's ongoing problems with a tax software system that is spewing corrupt data are going to cost taxpayers an additional $90,000 to process this year's countywide reassessment.

County Administrator Scott Moulder broke the bad news during his report to Oconee County Council on Tuesday night.

"It's consistently wrong all the time," Moulder said of the Manatron System that Oconee purchased in the spring of 2006.

Moulder said the data coming out of Manatron is "corrupt," just as it was last year when tax bills had to be verified manually by county staff working overtime.

County Auditor Ken Nix twice was granted 30-day extensions last year from the Department of Revenue to mail out tax notices past the deadline established by state law. The hold up delayed the collection of taxes in Oconee.

"We're having the same problem today," Moulder said.

Moulder said the $1.8 million contract signed with Tyler Technologies to do this year's reassessment of property values was based on the company using the Manatron system.

Moulder asked Tyler if it could do the reassessment using the county's old tax software system — Smith Data — but Tyler refused.

"Are we being held hostage by Tyler?" Council Vice Chairman Joel Thrift said.

TAX DATA: Plagues county

FROM PAGE A1

Moulder said the company insists it could not use the Smith Data system.

Thrift said that when a Tyler official was making its sales pitch to do the county's reassessment earlier in the year he was told the Manatron system was working.

"We knew it was not working," Moulder said. "My understanding is we knew it was not working."

The only option left for the county without delaying reassessment is to use Tyler's own software at a cost of $90,000 to get the county through the year. Moulder said Tyler usually offers the software for a three-year period, which would have cost the county $180,000, but made an exception for Oconee.

Moulder said the county still owes Manatron $90,000 and is still working with the company to find a solution to the problems.

In other action, the council agreed after coming out of executive session to pursue the purchase of three parcels.

Councilman Mario Suarez confirmed reports that the property, believed to be more than 400 acres, is located on Highway 11 and would be used for a recreational facility and light industry.

District 3 Councilman Wayne McCall, who represents the greater Walhalla area, presented two motions read by County Attorney Tom Martin related to the real estate transaction.

McCall's first motion, which passed unanimously, authorized Moulder to make sure appraisals and paperwork on sales option and earnest money requirements were in order and to bring his findings to council with the understanding that "time is of the essence."

The second motion offered on first reading in title only an ordinance authorizing the purchase of real estate property.

Martin said that because negotiations are ongoing, all the "what, where and how" of the matter would become public record as they are brought before council.

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