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New councilman to join search for county boss

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WALHALLA — In the spirit of being inclusive, the Oconee County Council decided this weekend to put off a final decision on who the next county administrator would be until after a special election Aug. 25 to elect a new councilman in District 1.

Council Chairman Reg Dexter said at a workshop Saturday that the winner of the election would be sworn in the next day so he could quickly jump into the process of selecting the new administrator.

By so doing, Dexter said a new county boss would probably not be offered a contract until the early or middle part of September. Council's original timeline was Aug. 20.

At the invitation of Dexter, Collins and Corbeil were present at Saturday's meeting and given the opportunity to share their thoughts on how the process should go forward.

In a display of local government transparency not seen during previous attempts to hire an administrator, council had Clerk Beth Hulse project a chart showing key steps and dates leading to a final selection.Dates include:

- July 15 — deadline for applications
- July 16-24 — Kay Olbon, Oconee's Human Resources director, and Joe Newton, deputy director of the Appalachian Council of Governments, are to sift through more than 100 applications and come up with the candidates that most closely meet the preferred criteria for the job
- By July 25 — Councilmen Dexter, Wayne McCall, Mario Suarez and Joel Thrift would come up with a list of the 15 candidates they like most, compare notes and try to reach a consensus on the top eight candidates
- Aug. 1 —deadline for the Clerk to Council to receive questionnaires given to department heads and elected officials asking for feedback on what they would like to see in a new administrator
- Aug 8 — council to consult with community leaders and the public sector to receive nput
- Aug. 10 — council to go into executive session and come up with the top five or six candidates.

After Aug. 10, Council probably would hire professionals to vet the credentials and character of the final handful of candidates. Following that council pick the top three candidates.

Once council narrows the search to three candidates, their identity and qualifications would be made public.