Oconee County Council looks at diverse field of candidates

Resumes of women and minorities among those flagged as most qualified for open county administrator position

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WALHALLA — The resumes that Oconee County Council members are sifting through to select the top eight candidates for the vacant administrator job include those of women and minorities.

Councilman Joel Thrift said Thursday that he was made aware by Human Resources Director Kay Olbon that two female candidates were among the 25 or so most qualified resumes set aside for County Council to look at.

Olbon also confirmed that the pre-screened top resumes also include a minority candidate.

Thrift said that in looking over the applications of the most qualified candidates recommended by Olbon and Joe Newton, the deputy director of the Appalachian Council of Governments, he does not even look at names. Instead, Thrift said he concentrates on reading the qualifications and tries not to look at names.

"We look at work record and prior work history and that kind of thing," Thrift said.

Just the same, Thrift said he would like to see a woman in the mix.

"I think that would be great; I would not have a problem with that at all," Thrift said. "I'd love to see a woman in it."

Kathy Williams, assistant director of the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC), said there have always been a few women holding the top county administrator positions during the 23 years she's been with the SCAC.

Counties currently with female administrators include Bamberg, Darlington, Hampton, Lexington and Saluda.

Counties that have a minority administrator are Dorchester, Hampton and Richland.

Williams said that other counties recruiting new administrators along with Oconee are Anderson, Horry and Dillon.

Oconee hired men during two previous recruiting efforts, but has had two interim female administrators, including Kendra Brown who currently holds the position.

County Council will convene Saturday in executive session to try to reach a consensus on the top eight candidates. Olbon and Newton screened approximately 120 resumes to find about 25 of the most qualified candidates.

Council Chairman Reg Dexter has indicated that if a consensus is not reached on the top eight, then a professional consulting firm would be hired to help with the search.