

Oconee agency gets creative

Parks, Recreation and Tourism boss praised for creativity in

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WALHALLA — Oconee's Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Phil Shirley was given a pat on the back by County Councilman Mario Suarez for putting his thinking cap on to creatively deal with cuts to his budget that would have severely curtailed services provided by PRT.

Faced with a 50 per-

cent reduction in his current \$100,000 part-time salary funding, Shirley convinced county officials at a budget workshop Tuesday night to allow a fund-balance transfer from savings in the current budget. The savings include \$22,500 unused for security at the county's three parks.

Shirley said that without boosting funding for his part-time help he would have been forced to reduce services pro-

vided countywide at parks during peak season.

Shirley also recommended that county officials transfer \$17,000 that had been earmarked to the South Carolina Heritage Corridor and the Pendleton Historic District Commission for marketing and put back into the severely cut Arts & Historical line item.

"Let me emphasize that those two organizations do a great job marketing the coun-

ty," Shirley said. "But I'm sure they understand it's a tight budget year and we have to fund our own first."

Without the \$17,000 transfer to Arts & Historical, the Oconee Heritage Center would have lost its only part-time employee, leaving ORT Director/Curator Nick Gambrell without help to staff the center and pursue other projects he's been working on.

"Thank you for being cre-

with budget

making up for shortfalls

ative," Suarez told Shirley.

Council approved PRT's \$427,418 budget with the amendments.

Shirley also proposed reducing camping rates at South Cove from \$15 to \$12 during chilly months from November to February in hopes of attracting more campers during the off season. He also asked Council to OK a \$50 annual pass to Oconee's three parks for non-residents. Residents already

enjoy a \$25 annual pass to the three parks. The regular daily park entrance fee is \$2.

Council also reviewed the budgets of several other departments, including Planning.

By a 3-1 vote, with Councilman Wayne McCall dissenting, the Council also approved \$13,602 that would allow staff in the Planning Department to oversee zoning under the county's new Zoning Enabling Ordinance.