Oconee airport work to resume next week

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — The much maligned runway extension project at the Oconee County Regional Airport might resume as early as next week.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said Friday that state regulators submitted an inspection report this week that calls for only minor changes to erosion control measures required by the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

Moulder said a DHEC inspector told the county to take photos of the fixes required and email them in.

"They said they don't have to come back here," Moulder said. "They left a checklist of four items that need to be cleaned up or fixed."

Oconee has been waiting for DHEC's final approval for sediment and erosion control work in order to get the runway project back on track.

It's been almost a year since the project began.

Extending the runway 600 feet to 5,000 was expected to have been completed in August. However, DHEC put the project on hold several months after it discovered that Oconee had proceeded without the necessary permit.

In June, Moulder acknowledged that an employee with the Talbert & Bright firm, which was hired by the county to manage the project, had fabricated a permit.

The U.S. Department of Justice office in Greenville is investigating the matter and charges could be pending, The Journal has learned.

The County Council approved a $358,850 change order last month for project contractor Plateau Excavation, Inc. to perform the additional sediment control work required by DHEC.

The original project cost of about $4.1 million has ballooned to $4.8 million.

Moulder told County Council this week that the runway project is now expected to be completed by the end of this year.

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Work on Oconee's $4.8 million runway extension project could resume next week..