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Oconee embraces sewer plan

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WALHALLA — After years of funding studies, making plans and doing nothing, the Oconee County Council is on the verge of moving forward on a three-phase, $11.7 million plan to get sewer into the Interstate 85 corridor and proposed Golden Corner Commerce Park.


Dexter

The council's Budget, Finance and Administration Committee on Monday enthusiastically embraced a Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendation for bringing sewer to southern Oconee.

Economic development experts have for many years told county officials that getting sewer into the I-85 corridor would open the door to economic development, create jobs and expand the tax base.

Blue Ribbon Panel Chairman Greg Dietterick outlined the recommendation.

Dietterick said the first phase calls for a package sewer plant at the industrial park site in Fair Play along with a 33-acre drip irrigation system and pipe system to Exit 2 and Exit 4 on I-85. He said the initial phase would be the

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biggest investment of all three phases at a cost $6.6 million.

Dietterick expects that Exit 1 probably would be privately developed or done through a public-private partnership.

The phased approach, Dietterick said, would allow the county to monitor growth and the type and size of businesses attracted to the area. He said toilets could be flushing in 18 months, with minimum build out of the first phase in about five years.

Development of exit 4 also holds the promise of extending lines into Anderson County and possibly adding Anderson as a customer, Dietterick said.

The second phase would open up exit 2 at a cost of $1.4 million and the third phase could double the capacity at the treatment plant to 100,000 gallons a day.

Blue Ribbon Panel members recommended that a village-type look and buffer be established to keep the I-85 stretch in Oconee from becoming a billboard corridor.

Council will go over the project in more detail when it hosts a meeting on Thursday evening at 6 with the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority.

Council also agreed that the county must act immediately on jail expansion and improvements, courthouse modifications to comply with federal Americans With Disabilities Act guidelines, the building of a new fire station in Westminster and repair of Cobb Bridge.

County officials don't know how much the improvements to the courthouse will cost. However, council wants to keep jail costs at $10 million or less.

"These are things we already know need to be done," Council Chairman Reg Dexter said.

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