Oconee hires new interim county boss

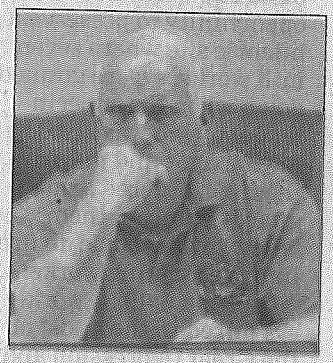
BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County soon will have a hired hand to help run the government.

County Council came out of an hour-long executive session Tuesday night to announce the contracting of well-traveled James Eugene Klugh of Lexington, S.C., to take over interim administrator duties from Kendra Brown.

Council Chairman Reg Dexter said the move frees Brown to concentrate on her duties as financial director. He thanked Brown and Clerk to Council Beth Hulse for ably filling in after the firing of Administrator Dale Surrett in April.

Councilman Wayne McCall said he's received many calls asking him why Brown and Hulse are not allowed to continue running the day-to-day operations.



JESSICA NELMS | STAFF

Councilman Wayne McCall did not join the rest of the council on Tuesday in approving an agreement to build a new fire station in Westminster.

"They don't want the job," McCall said to the dozen or so still in attendance. "People, don't call us saying, 'Why don't they stay?'"

Klugh will work on a part-time basis, probably eight hours three-times a week at a rate of $70 an

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hour.

Earlier, the council voted to approve an agreement to build a more than $2 million joint-use fire station in Westminster. The vote was 4-0 with McCall, who has been opposed to the project, keeping mum.

After the meeting, McCall was still stewing about building what he calls a "Taj Mahal" for Westminster, while needs in other parts of the county go unaddressed.

"Doesn't Walhalla deserve a $2 million fire station, or Seneca, or Salem?" McCall asked. "How about West Union? I just hope we don't get into a budget shortfall next year and be forced to furlough firefighters at the station in Westminster."

Vice Chairman Joel Thrift, who represents Westminster, presented

'I just hope we don't get into a budget shortfall next year and be forced to furlough firefighters at the station ...'

Wayne McCall
Oconee County Councilman

the motion to approve the agreement.

"This agreement was the work of the prior council," Thrift said. "We have chosen to honor this agreement."

The approved agreement is a revised version of one that surfaced in 2007, but was never signed. Westminster is

to replace Brown

providing almost 15 acres for the station, which would include space for county Emergency Services operations.

County officials have talked about paying for the new fire station through a bond issue that also would fund an expansion of the jail and modifications to the courthouse to comply with American With Disabilities Act guidelines.

The issue of how to pay for the fire station could come up during a Council Budget, Finance and Administration workshop this afternoon.

With the hiring of Klugh, who might report to work as early as Monday, Oconee gets a veteran consultant with more than 40 years management experience in local government. In fact, Dexter said Klugh goes by the title of "professional interim administrator."

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