Oconee panel receives marching orders

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WALHALLA — The County Council gave marching orders Thursday night to a nine-member panel that will study and make recommendations of the best option for getting sewer to the Interstate 85 corridor and the proposed industrial park in Fair Play.

Seneca City Administrator and Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority member Greg Dietterick will chair the Blue-Ribbon panel.

Councilman Joel Thrift spelled out the mission for the group. Thrift said the focus should remain on just the I-85 corridor and the Golden Corner Commerce Park.

"There are several ideas out there of what to do and how to do it," Thrift said. "We'd like your recommendations that would serve the county well for the next 20 to 25 years."

Each member was handed a binder containing a stack of studies to read. Thrift charged the group to come up with their recommendations in 90 days or sooner.

It was also Thrift who nominated Dietterick to chair the panel. Council Chairman Reg Dexter and Paul Corbeil, the only other Council members present, approved the choice.

Other panel members attending the meeting were Marty Jennings, Charles Chamberlain, Frank Holloman, Ryan Honea, Richard Hughes, Robbie Lee, Larry Linsin and Randy Rentz.

Dietterick said that although a partnership option with Anderson County is not included in any of the studies presented to the panel, he said it is one the should be considered. He said Anderson County has made overtures to the Sewer Authority and that both sides are planning to meet.

"I would be looking to partnerships to do this as a way to share the costs," Dietterick said. "Sewer is expensive. No one wants to be in the sewer business."

Prompted by questions by member of the panel, Dietterick gave a brief background of what led to the formation of the Sewer Authority, the purpose of the Sewer Water Action Group (SWAG) agreement with the county and why the county agreed to pay almost $610,000 annually to the Sewer Authority as part of the SWAG deal.

Dietterick cautioned panel members not to let SWAG and the $610,000 to cloud the issues, but rather remain focused on the mission spelled out by Thrift.