# Oconee runway extension costs take off

## Council asked to add more than $358K to growing $4.8M tab

**BY CARLOS GALARZA**
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee officials are being asked again to dig into the county coffers to pay for increasing costs to the runway extension project at the local airport.

County Administrator Scott Moulder and Procurement Director Robyn Courtright are expected to present the Oconee County Council tonight with a change order that would jack up the cost of the airport project by more than $358,000.

The latest change order comes on the heels of more than $981,000 the council approved for Plateau Excavation last month on a project that's been marred by shady actions on the part of airport's hired engineers.

On several occasions County Administrator Scott Moulder has said that that an engineer with the county's contracted airport consultants, Talbert & Bright, is under federal investigation.

Moulder recently said the engineer who forged a state permit and led the county to believe that work at the airport

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**IF YOU GO**

**What:** Oconee County Council meeting
**When:** 6 p.m. tonight
**Where:** Council Chambers, 415 N. Pine St., Walhalla

# RUNWAY: Project has been a 'mess'

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could proceed when it really didn't have the permit to do so, "is going to jail."

During a recent speaking engagement before a civic group in Seneca, Moulder said that about 75 percent of his time during his first three months as administrator was spent dealing with the airport "mess."

County officials say the new change order is needed to cover sediment erosion control items associated with the haul road that Plateau Excavation built across the entire airport from Shiloh Road to the area of the runway extension.

According to information included in tonight's council agenda, there are no additional grant funds to cover the new change order for the amount of $358,850, and the money would have to come from the county's fund balance.

County officials say the new change order, if approved, would increase the total contract amount to $4.8 million while the original cost was $4.2 million. The Federal Aviation Administration is picking up 95 percent of the project's costs. Oconee is responsible for 2.5 percent of the costs.

Council also is expected to hold public hearings tonight on an ordinance that would amend road standards, establish new construction inspection policies and funding of such inspections, among other things. Council will vote on a third and final reading of this ordinance.

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