Oconee spec building No.

BY MIKE EADS
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County officials appear to be full speed ahead on a third spec building to attract new businesses to the area.

Less than a month after A.I.D. Corp. snapped up the 50,000-square-foot shell building in Oconee Commerce Center, Executive Director Richard Blackwell of the county's Economic Development Commission, has begun pitching construction of a new building. He presented a plan to the county's Capital Projects Advisory Committee (CPAC) last week, and that group voted Wednesday to forward a favorable recommendation to the Oconee County Planning Commission.

"Doing it now is an economic imperative," said CPAC member John Rau on Wednesday.

Committee chair Paul Corbeil, the County Council's point man on economic development issues, agreed wholeheartedly.

"It would cheaper for us to do it now, rather than a year from now," Corbeil said.

The spec would be the same design as the last one, with a construction time of approximately nine months.

Blackwell recommended a site in Echo Hills Industrial Park on S.C. 11, as the County Council voted last week to proceed with

3 gaining steam

its development and there is sewer across the road from the park.

There is the matter of paying for it. The county will net roughly $500,000 from the sale to A.I.D. that could be used to offset the estimated $1-1.5 million price tag. There are also Economic Development millage dollars for 2014 and 2015 that have not been earmarked for any other projects as of yet and the possibility of securing Utility Tax Credit money from Blue Ridge Cooperative, as the council did to fund the second shell building.

Corbeil said it's money well and wisely spent.

"You have to be competitive with incentives ... but I think we're religious with cost-benefit analyses," he said. "The biggest value is showing site consultants (and businesses) that you're serious about business."

meads@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685