Oconee to shuffle fire substation order

More time needed to service The Cliffs

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WALHALLA — Cliffs Communities homeowners in Oconee County likely won't see a fire substation near their neighborhoods this year.



King

Although county officials ranked an area near The Cliffs at Keowee Falls off Highway 11 as the second-priority location for a substation, it may get passed over.

Oconee County Fire Chief Charlie King said Tuesday that more time would likely be needed to work out an arrangement whereby the county could build a substation close to the gates of the upscale Cliffs properties near Salem.

"It's a unique challenge," King said. "You could understand why they might have a problem with having a $150,000 building outside their gate."

According to a proposed fire station service analysis undertaken by the county, a substation in the general vicinity of The Cliffs would bring 332 address points within five miles of the station. The area is second only to a proposed substation near the entrance of Foxwood Hills near Westminster, which would have 614 address points within five miles.

King said he expects construction of the substation at Foxwood Hills to begin in eight to 10 weeks. Foxwood Hills donated the land for the station.

Seeing that it might take longer to find a suitable solution for The Cliffs at Keowee Falls, King said the county likely would move to put a second substation this year between Long Creek and Westminster on Highway 76. That location, on land already owned by the county at Holly Springs, would access 259 address points within five miles.

King said this would give the county more time to work out a suitable plan with property owners at The Cliffs.

The Cliffs Communities filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last month.

Oconee has set aside $300,000 in its current budget for the first two substations, and King expects both to be built and operating by July.

The substations would be about 2,500 to 3,000 square feet and large enough to hold two trucks and contain one bathroom, King said.

In total, Oconee identified eight locations on a map of the county that would bring the most address points within five miles, which would help homeowners pay less for insurance.

Outside of the Foxwood Hills and Holly Springs locations, Oconee has not made a final decision on the other six sites.

King said that community members have been offering properties to the county because they know it would benefit them with lower insurance rates.

Oconee plans to build two substations a year over a four-year period as part of County Administrator Scott Moulder's fire plan.

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