Oconee to unveil Project North

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Some critics say Oconee County put the cart before the horse in the way it has dealt with plans to purchase and develop more than 400 acres on Highway 11.

Officials look to finally get the horse in its rightful place by presenting a conceptual site plan for Project North at tonight's County Council meeting.

Council will review and discuss the plans that engineering firm BP Barber has been working on for the past two months. Barber rushed to complete a set of preliminary surveys on the property as part of the county's due diligence before closing on the deal.

The plans will be posted on the County Council's website following the meeting, which gives the public two weeks to review them before council holds public hearings Nov. 23. Council is expected to take a final vote on the purchase that same night.

A majority of council members is in favor of taking a portion of the 415 acres for a public recreational facility. They hope it would attract light industry for the remainder of the property.

Councilman Wayne McCall thinks that using any of the property for anything other than heavy industry would be a waste of taxpayers' money. The deal is expected to cost the county approximately $2.5 million.

Also included on tonight's agenda, council is expected to:

- Take a third and final vote on a revised Comprehensive Plan;
- Get a first look at a fee-in-lieu-of-taxes proposal on Project LSSSD from a company that promises to invest $5 million;
- Take first reading on an ordinance authorizing the issue and sale of General Obligation Bonds for financing a new jail; and
- Have a first reading on an ordinance that spells out the powers of the Oconee County Infrastructure Advisory Commission.

IF YOU GO

What: Oconee County Council meeting
When: 6 tonight
Where: Council Chambers, 415 S. Pine St., Walhalla

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