Council to consider models to account for population shifts

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Oconee County's voting districts likely will undergo changes before the 2012 elections.

The 2010 U.S. Census indicates that much of the growth in Oconee is taking place in County Council District 5, which likely would trigger changes to the council districts.

"There will be changes," said Joy Brooks, the county's Voter Registration and Elections director, on Thursday. "Most of the growth is in District 5."

Brooks said that if one district gets too large, some of its numbers might go to another district to achieve balance.

Another possible scenario for achieving that balance could be increasing the number of council districts to seven, which also is being talked about.

"I've heard there's been some interest in increasing the number of districts," Brooks said.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said Thursday that he would present information and models of how the districts might be configured, but it would be up to council to decide how to balance it out.

Moulder said one of the models to be presented to council is one showing how a seven-district map might look like.

"We're not proposing a specific model," Moulder said.

The county boss indicated that a council workshop would be scheduled to make the redistricting presentation. Moulder has yet to pick a date.

Any redistricting plan to achieve "ideal" district population would require state and federal approval.

Planning Director Art Holbrooks indicated earlier this year that the ideal district population for five districts should be 14,855, which is derived from dividing Oconee's 2010 Census total population of 74,273 by five.

Holbrooks said the redistricting lines have to be redrawn in advance of the 2012 elections.

The ideal district population has increased by 1,612 over the past 10 years, Holbrooks added.

Councilman Reg Dexter represents District 5, which takes in the southern part of the county, including Fair Play, State Highway 59, a portion of State Highway 11 and a section of Interstate 85. District 5 stretches east to border the high-growth Seneca-Clemson area.

Dexter could not be reached for comment Thursday.

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Oconee voting district changes in works

