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Petition calls for elected supervisor

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WALHALLA — A movement is afoot to bring back a Supervisor-Council form of government in Oconee County.

Promoters of a petition drive to collect the necessary number of signatures that would allow such a proposition on a referendum ballot in 2010 say the switch is needed because local government is in a shambles.

In recent days, Oconee residents have seen County Administrator Dale Surrett fired and District 1 Councilman George Blanchard resign, in part, because of the way Surrett's contract was terminated.

"We've had six administrators in the past five years; let's go back to what has worked" Seneca attorney Julian Stoudemire said Thursday.

About 4,200 signatures, or 10 percent of registered voters in Oconee, would be needed to get the petition on the ballot in the November 2010 election.

Although not fully organized, Stoudemire said he felt compelled to release a copy of a petition he and Walhalla attorney Lowell Ross drew up.

In stating the rationale for seeking a change in the form of government, the petition references the recent upheaval on the council and adds: "It is apparent that the majority of the present council intends to administer the affairs of the county and that the intent of the administrator form of government will not be in effect. Petitioners believe that an elected supervisor would be more responsible to the electorate."

Asked when the petition drive would begin, Stoudemire said that Surrett's scheduled public hearing May 12 at 7 p.m. would be an excellent occasion "to come out of the closet." Stoudemire urged people to come with their voter registration cards so they could sign the petition.