LOCAL NEWS

Pickens to pursue funds for U.S. 123 area

Interchange, sewer sought near Central

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Hoping to win federal stimulus money, Pickens County Council has moved forward two projects that could open for development land near Central and U.S. 123.

County Administrator Chappell Hurst told council Monday night that the state Department of Transportation needs timelines for two projects: one to build an interchange for Simms School Road and U.S. 123; and a second that would fund improvements to the sewer system in the same area.

The two projects could open land for development along what Hurst said is roughly a five-mile stretch of U.S. 123.

"The new sewer line that the county has approved construction will run right by that interchange and connect" to existing lines, Hurst said after the meeting.

"By having sewer and a way to get off (U.S. 123), you open up numerous large tracks of land that are right of off Sims School Road. That's what we're trying to do is get access to those properties, so we can have economic development in the future," he said.

"And that's what we believe the stimulus money is for – is to further economic development and prosperity and create jobs."

To ensure that county staffers can develop the timelines in time to qualify for a piece $3.9 million in stimulus funds earmarked for Anderson, Oconee and Pickens counties, council unanimously approved a motion to move $425,000 from the reserve fund into the contingency fund.

That means the money can be accessed, if needed, to cover the cost of hiring an engineering firm to perform studies necessary for creating the sewer-project timeline.

Of the $425,000, $200,000 will be available as matching funds, if needed to quality for stimulus money earmarked for education.

Hurst said after the meeting that the deadline for projects for the first round of funding is Thursday. The deadline for project proposals to be eligible for a second round of funding is expected to come in September, Hurst said.