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Planned 'Heritage Fair'

Organizers blame snub from state Young Farmers and

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WALHALLA — The School District of Oconee County has come to the rescue of the organizers of the Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair by allowing them use of 30 acres at West-Oak High School to hold their event.

Without the school district's intervention in providing a new venue, the Heritage Fair would have been in jeopardy of being scrapped this year, Gwen McPhail, chief organizer of the event, reported during Tuesday night's Oconee County Council meeting.

McPhail, an agriculture teacher at West-Oak, had been working with county officials since February in an attempt to hold the Heritage Fair at the proposed Golden Corner Commerce Park land owned by the county.

However, those plans were dashed when the South Carolina Young Farmers and Agribusiness Association (SCYFAA) decided not to endorse the local organizers' project, McPhail said.

According to McPhail, SCYFAA's decision was devastating given that the West-Oak High School chapter of the Young Farmers and Agribusiness Association has been paying dues to the state organization for years.

McPhail blamed SCYFAA's decision squarely on the organization's treasurer, who she said didn't want to submit a form needed to secure her group's status as nonprofit.

changes venue

Agribusiness Association

"It was devastating to have this one man be a stumbling block," McPhail said after the council meeting.

McPhail said she called Michael Thorsland, assistant superintendent of administration/operations, to explain the local group's predicament. He quickly offered the 30 acres at West-Oak High School.

Although the 30 acres is less than what the group would have had at the Golden Corner Commerce Park site, McPhail said it is significantly more space than some other major fairs.

Still, she said original plans would be scaled down. On the plus side, she said the new venue would have the parking, power and water that was missing at the county's industrial land site.