

Planners want \$9M library downsized

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WALHALLA — Oconee Planning Commission members would like to see a new library branch in Seneca, but not at the \$9.1 million price pitched by library officials.

Commissioners zeroed in on the proposed library Monday night as they once again tweaked the draft priority listing of capital projects for the new 2011-12 fiscal year that begins July 1.

Coming into last night's meeting, the proposed library stood in the Priority-2 category of projects deemed as important and to be addressed as funds become available.

Commissioners kept the library project in the same category, but this time they passed a motion unanimously recommending that

'That \$9 million figure makes me choke.'



Andrea 'Andy' Heller
Oconee County Planning Commissioner

the project be scaled back to \$6 million.

The recommendation is in keeping with the commission's role as an advisory group to County Council.

"That \$9 million figure makes me choke," said Commissioner Andrea "Andy" Heller in presenting the motion.

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"They keep coming back with it," added Heller, referring to the Oconee County Public Library board's persistence on keeping its original two-story design plans intact.

"It's the magic number," she said of the \$9.1 million price tag.

Other commissioners shared Heller's view.

"I can't see funding that library at that cost," said Commission Vice Chairman Howard Moore.

Library officials contend that the proposed 35,000-square-foot facility is intended to serve a growing population for decades to come and that to cut back would

be shortsighted.

They also say that the cost would likely decrease if and when the project is actually put out to bid.

The Commission also agreed to toss a project — \$5 million for a hotel/conference center — off of the priority list.

The project was listed under the near-term future needs category.

Commissioners did put off Heller's request to recommend funding for the YMCA until they can get some clarification on concerns raised by Moore.

Moore questioned the legality of giving taxpayers' money to an organization that is private.

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