Plans under way for Highway 11 rec complex

Moulder: YMCA interested in partnering with Oconee

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — There is growing consensus on the Oconee County Council to build a recreational facility on more than 400 acres on Highway 11.

Council members agreed during a workshop Saturday to move forward with the purchase of a 415-acre tract and instructed a consultant to proceed with preliminary plans that would include both passive and active recreational facilities.

Furthermore, County Administrator Scott Moulder said the YMCA indicated it would consider overseeing a recreational program for Oconee at the proposed site.

"They are interested in partnering with us," Moulder said.

Council also left the door open to using a portion of the property to attract suitable industry or manufacturing.

Council heard a presentation from an Oconee resident who was involved in developing four mixed-use projects in the Atlanta area.

George Eichler said the first thing that went into the industrial park at John's Creek in 1985 were two ball fields.

Eichler said that 20 years later John's Creek Industrial Park is home to 85 companies and 12,000 employees surrounded by 14 communities.

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TER: County is on track

The retired developer repeated what many other experts have told county officials: "The corridor between Atlanta and Charlotte is going to grow."

"You have a lot going for you in the future, if you do the right things," Eichler said.

Wayne McCall was the only councilman not present at Saturday's workshop. Instead, he circulated a statement that was read at the meeting.

"If monies from county taxpayers are to be used to purchase this 415-acre tract, the use should be one that provides jobs and tax revenues for citizens, given the high unemployment rate among our county residents," McCall said in the statement.

McCall warned that proposals for recreational uses "would do nothing to ease the unemployment numbers or improve the tax base."

McCall said the proposed property to be purchased, called Project North, is perfect for heavy industry because of its proximity to existing water, sewer and electricity.

Furthermore, McCall said the county should ditch expensive plans to develop the Golden Corner Commerce Park in Fair Play. He said the GCCP property should become the permanent home to the South Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair to be held next month and have other recreational facilities at the site.

Council Chairman Reg Dexter took issue with McCall's statement.

"I believe anything that improves quality of life is not a waste of money," Dexter said.

Moulder said the county is on track to complete its due diligence on the property and still close within the 90-day execution of the land deal.

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