Project North vote could be delayed

County officials say Highway 11 plans are not set in stone

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WALHALLA — Development of the 415-acre Highway 11 site called Project North is going to be a work in progress with no plans set in stone, Oconee County officials made clear Wednesday.

The only thing definite is that public hearings on the ordinance to purchase the property will be held Nov. 23 as scheduled, County Administrator Scott Moulder said.

However, Moulder told The Journal following a County Council Planning and Economic Development meeting Wednesday that a final vote on the proposed $2.5 million land purchase might not happen as scheduled Nov. 23.

Making it clear that he was less than satisfied with the presentation made Tuesday night of the conceptual plans of the how the property would be used, Moulder said he would like the engineering firm to make a more formal presentation to Oconee County Council before a vote is taken.


Moulder

Moulder also made it clear that making available a conceptual plan of how the property could be used is not tied to the vote on purchasing the 415 acres.

There is nearly a consensus on the council that the deal is too good to pass up. But there also is growing concern by some that Oconee County should not be in the real estate business competing with the private sector, particularly if there are no definite plans on how the property is to be used.

The conceptual plan unveiled at Tuesday night's council meeting divides the 415 acres equally between recreational complex and a light to moderate industrial site.

Moulder stressed Wednesday that, in his judgment, the recreational facilities — including a cluster of baseball and soccer fields, a civic center, an indoor recreational facility, 2,000 seat outdoor amphitheater, walking trails, a picnic area, a playground and more — could cost $30 million.

As for the industrial side, Moulder said the final plans would include ingress and egress for trucks without cul de sacs for trucks to turn despite the fact that they appeared on the plan Tuesday.

Jim Alexander, Oconee's Economic Development director who also attended Wednesday's meeting, said that the footprint of the industrial sites carved out on the plan does not mean that a building that size would be built.

Development of the property, county officials said, would be over time.

Moulder added that there are many options available for dealing with the property, including turning it over to a private developer.

As for its uses, Moulder said all ideas are on the table, including the possibility of using a portion of the land for a Tri-County Technical College campus.

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