

Propex buy advances

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Seneca City Council OKs \$2.5M purchase on 2nd reading

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SENECA — Seneca City Council approved on second reading Wednesday night the purchase of the former Propex property in an effort to bring jobs to Oconee County.

Seneca officials had been tightlipped about the identity of the property after first reading last week, but with negotiations completed, council came out of executive session Wednesday to approve the purchase for \$2.5 million — a reduction from last year's asking price of \$2.85 million.

Oconee County is prepared to invest at least

\$400,000 for undeveloped acreage on the property, though City Attorney Mike Smith said the exact cost on the county's end is yet to be determined because of surveying that needs to be done on the land.

Mayor Dan Alexander said late Tuesday night that there was already at least one suitor wanting to locate in Seneca who was waiting for the city to acquire the property.

Propex Inc. — a Chattanooga, Tenn.-based producer of geosynthetics, concrete and industrial fabrics and fiber — closed the Seneca plant

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in 2006. The only tenant is Johnson Controls, which runs a warehouse operation out of a portion of the building.

Possible contamination from past operations at the 148-acre property drew some concern about the acquisition on the county end, but Smith said such concerns are being addressed in the due diligence phase of the purchase process. Before the transaction is finalized, an environmental check will be made

to ensure the site meets standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. While some contamination has been reported to DHEC dating back as far as 30 years ago, Propex was never named a Superfund site, or a hazardous location.

"That's a condition of the agreement is an environmental check," Smith said.

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