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Propex talks between Seneca and

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SENECA — A Dec. 8 meeting of Seneca City Administrator Greg Dietterick, City Attorney Mike Smith, Oconee County Attorney Tom Martin and real estate attorney Jim Price to discuss a possible city-county partnership to purchase Propex went well, parties to the meeting have confirmed.

The Propex plant, which boasts 148 acres and well-developed infrastructure, has become a possible target by the city of Seneca for a city-owned industrial park. That idea later evolved into a county-city partnership on the more than $2 million property as a means to bring more jobs to Oconee County.

Tax breaks, electricity, water, sewer, rail and proximity to the major artery of Interstate 85 could all be used to entice manufacturers to locate their operations at such a location, Dietterick and Oconee County Economic Development Director Jim Alexander have surmised.

"There was a meeting between city and county last week concerning possible shared economic development efforts that was very positive in tone and progress," Martin said. "There is still some work to be done, in terms of determining suitability of any given property for the respective purposes of the city and county, as well as to draft some form of agreement of mutual effort between the city and county, and several of those processes are progressing simultaneously."

Dietterick said he anticipated Price, Smith and Martin would likely meet again soon, possibly even next week, to further the discussion.

"We did meet. We've had some conversations about it, and they are receptive to a partnership; we're wanting the lawyers to sit down in the near future and draft something that could be equitable for everybody," Dietterick said.

Propex Inc., a Chattanooga, Tenn.-based

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> **Tom Martin**
> Oconee County attorney

Oconee warming up

producer of geosynthestics, concrete and industrial fabrics and fiber, closed the Seneca plant in 2006, leaving behind 9,000 square feet of office space and 413,000 square feet of warehouse space. Though there have been suitors, the space has gone mostly unused since the plant's closure. Johnson Controls has a warehouse operation on a small portion of the property.

"There is nothing final yet, of course, and anything that staff comes up with would have to be presented to the respective councils for their consideration and approval before meaningful work progresses — or certainly before it could be completed," Martin said.