Search for new county boss on hold, for now

Firing of County Administrator Dale Surrett could have legal implications for Council

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WALHALLA — Acting Administrator Elizabeth "Beth" Hulse was running the show Wednesday on Pine Street and right now it is anybody's guess how long she'll remain interim boss.

One day after the Oconee County Council fired Dale Surrett as administrator on a split vote during a stormy marathon meeting it is no longer clear how long it would take to find a permanent replacement.

Council Chairman Reg Dexter alluded as much when he said it was too premature to start a search until pending contractual matters with Surrett are finalized.

Dexter said he and the other two council members who voted to oust Surrett have been advised by County Attorney Tom Martin to limit their comments on the matter because of possible litigation.

After Tuesday night's 3-2 vote to terminate his contract, Surrett had no comment other than to say that he needed to talk with his lawyer. Surrett did not return a call to his mobile phone Wednesday.

"We have not heard from Dale since last night," Dexter said.

Although Dexter had indicated Tuesday night that a search for an administrator would begin immediately, now that plan of action has been put

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Jessica Nelms/Staff

County officials have declined to say whether critical comments made by county fair organizer Gwen McPhail at Tuesday's council meeting led to a decision later in that meeting to fire Administrator Dale Surrett.