

Settlement sought on airport lawsuit

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County took a stab at settling a nearly \$2 million civil lawsuit filed by the general contractor that worked on the runway extension project at the local airport.

County Administrator Scott Moulder spent much of Wednesday in Greenville taking part in closed-door mediation with Plateau Excavation Inc. of Austell, Ga.

Plateau filed the lawsuit May 9, 2011. The company alleges that it suffered damages when the county's project manager, Talbert & Bright Inc. halted the job. Plateau claims it was told to keep people and equipment on standby.

Oconee County countered by suing Talbert & Bright for professional malpractice and negligence. Oconee is seeking almost \$2 million in damages. A Talbert

& Bright engineer who oversaw the runway project was convicted of federal charges last year for falsifying a state permit. When state regulators learned that the permit was forged, they temporarily halted the project.

Talbert & Bright also took part in the mediation that took place at the McNair Law Firm's Greenville office.

McNair Attorney Benjamin "Ned" Nicholson represented Oconee at the proceedings. Nicholson's office said mediation would continue today, if a settlement could not be reached Wednesday.

The parties selected Frank Smith, a Columbia construction lawyer, as the mediator.

Moulder said Wednesday afternoon it was "a little premature" to know what the outcome would be.

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685