

Trash machine of the future

Pickens County also showing interest in new technology

By **CARLOS GALARZA**
carlos@dailyjm.com

WALHALLA—Apparently, Oconee County has not heard the last from a group trying to sell an expensive, yet ultra-modern method of turning trash to sand.

County Councilman Wayne McCall said Thursday that county officials are setting up a meeting later this month to hear from a top executive of a Swiss company that is interested in

bankrolling a multimillion dollar molecular reactor project in Oconee capable of converting tons of household garbage each year into fine sand.

McCall said Italian engineers who have been working with the cutting-edge technology since 2000 in southern Italy also have been invited, as well as a corps of translators.

Furthermore, McCall said he's already heard from neighboring Pickens County Administrator J. Chappell

Hurst Jr., who also is intrigued by the technology and would like to know more about it and the possibility of partnering with Oconee on the venture.

Hurst could not be reached for comment.

An initial proposal was made to the county before a rather sparse gathering two weeks ago during a rare late-Friday afternoon workshop.

Roberto Sala, president of Euronexus in San Jose, Costa Rica, made the presentation at

the request of McCall.

Sala told county officials that while the gasification of garbage is not new, the technology he is pitching, which would require a cooling system similar to a nuclear reactor, makes major improvement. In fact, he said some of the European developed technology is still in the process of being patented.

The cutting-edge part of the system, according to Sala, is a patented molecular reactor

talks continue

that turns garbage into sand

that operates at 2,000 degrees Celsius (about 3,800 degrees F.) that reduces garbage to fine sand. He said the byproduct of the process is up to 7 megawatts of alternative energy, along with hydrogen and carbon dioxide, which is typically found in carbonated soft drinks and has other valuable commercial uses.

McCall said the chief executive officer of Magnolia Inc., a Swiss-based investment capital firm, will make the trip to

Oconee for the meeting tentatively scheduled for April 20. Magnolia is interested in financing the construction of a demonstrator model plant that would include a research and training facility.

Sala said the cost of the project would depend on the size of the reactor. He said a smaller model to handle a county the size of Oconee could cost about \$40 million and be modular and expandable.