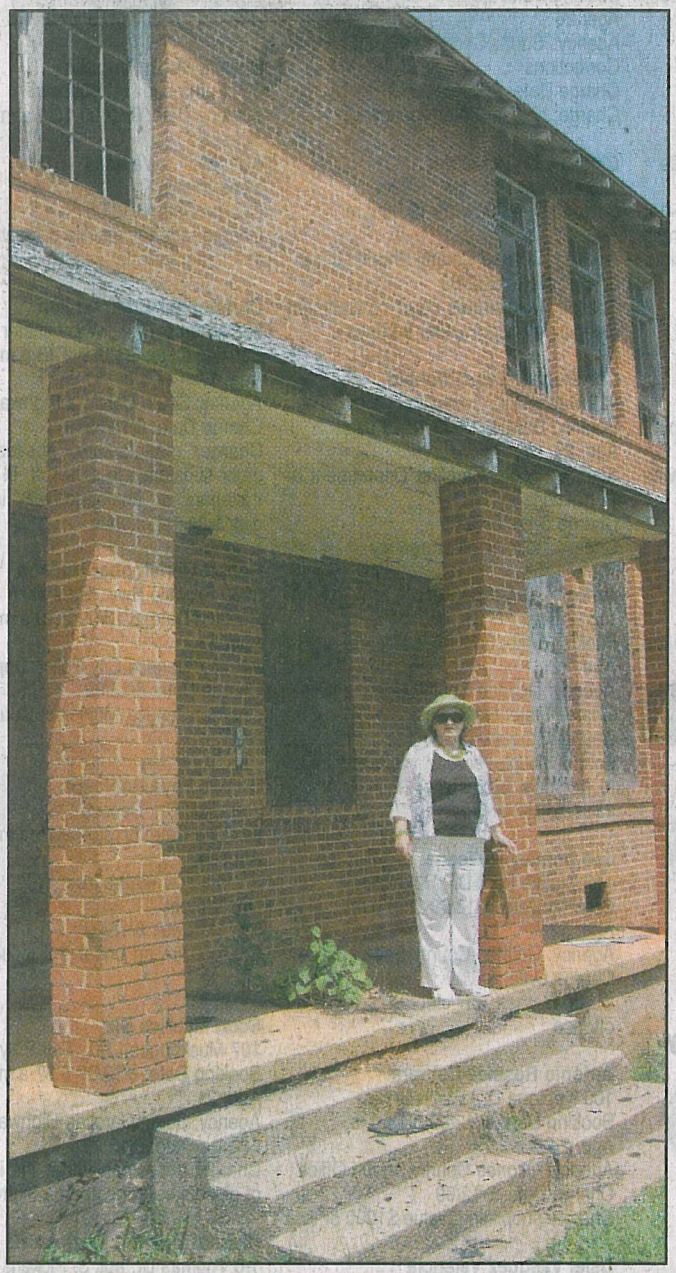


Jessica Sibley/Staff

West Union Mayor Sharon Nunnery takes a moment on the porch of the West Union schoolhouse that the town is trying to refurbish as a welcome center on Highway 11.

West Union mayor has big ideas for 1920s schoolhouse

By JESSICA SIBLEY
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WEST UNION — The former grammar school next to the West Union Fire Department could mean big changes for Oconee County.

Mayor Sharon Nunnery is leading the pack on refurbishing the building that was erected in the early 1920s by urging the public to get involved with saving it.

Storm damage coupled with years of wear and tear have left the school with holes in the roof and shattered windows.

The key, Nunnery said, is to get those fixed first, then the real planning can begin.

"Once we are in the dry, we can focus on the future plans and take our time if need be," she said. "But the time is now to get on this project and repair these necessities."

Nunnery has a vision for its usage that could potentially benefit the entire county of Oconee.

Her vision comes wrapped up in a multipurpose building centered on a Highway 11 welcome center.

"When I drive up from the interstate, there are no places to stop and get information about this beautiful area," she said. "This building is in a prime location for a welcome center while we could have a section dedicated to adult education."

Nunnery also said the building, with its historic double staircase, is perfect for weddings and special events.

Nunnery and the West Union Town Council have spoken with contractors about the potential to forge ahead with repairs, and was given good news.

"They've told me that all of this wood in the school is perfectly good while the entire building is very repairable," she said.

The cost of putting in new windows and repairing the roof is estimated at about $100,000.

And while grants are being applied for, Nunnery said the initial repairs cannot wait for next year's grant announcements.

"This is a plea for those out there who want to restore a historic building that could largely benefit Oconee's future to please get involved," she said. "I know the economy is bad, but we are also looking for a business or two that might sponsor this project as well ... If we work together this can be a great thing."