

\$76M expansion project comes before

Three public hearings also on tonight's agenda

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — The expansion of an existing Oconee company that would mark the county's largest economic development capital investment not related to Duke Energy will see its incentive package introduced before county

council tonight.

An amended and restated fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement between the county and the company, dubbed "Project Maxwell," is up for first reading at the 6 p.m. regular meeting of council, which will also hold public hearings on a trio of ordinances.

"Project Maxwell"

intends to invest \$76.8 million aligned with the project and will create 163 new jobs, according to the agenda item summary, which notes that the ordinance only stipulates the company must invest a minimum of \$60 million in taxable investment in the county within a 10-year period.

The ordinance would also put into place a special source revenue



Blackwell

credit for the company, which Oconee Economic Alliance executive director Richard Blackwell told his board of directors in

January was an existing Oconee-based company. When finalized by

county council

council and announced by the S.C. Department of Commerce, the project would continue a strong economic development year for Oconee. Since the calendar turned to 2017, Schneider Electric announced a \$7.3 million expansion and 56 new jobs at its Seneca facility, Itron announced a \$10 million capital investment and 100 new jobs in West Union, Jantzen announced a \$4 million expansion and 16

jobs in Seneca, and Clemson EPOCH announced a \$60 million mixed-use/student housing development that will create 30 new jobs.

Also of note on tonight's agenda are three public hearings prior to third and final readings of the associated ordinances.

The first would amend Chapter 32 of the county's code to revise its

The second public hearing is for an ordinance that would authorize a contract for the design, construction and operation of the Oconee County Workforce Development Center and the transfer of the land upon which it would be located.

The OCWDC would include the Tri-County Technical College satellite campus, for which the college held a groundbreaking ceremony Friday, as well as the School District of Oconee County's future career center and adult education facilities.

The contract would transfer the project site — located inside the Oconee Industry and Technology Park on S.C. Highway 11 — from the county's ownership to the SDOC, which will bear primary responsibility for the design and construction of the project.

The contract states that the county's contribution to the project is limited to site improvements, infrastructure and the transfer of the property, while TCTC's obligations to the project are limited by the state appropriations —

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standards for signs and billboards, notably adding language that stipulates no sign shall contain more than 75 feet of sign area per sign face. That limit excludes billboards, which may contain up to 672 square feet of sign area.

The ordinance would also add language defining what constitutes a billboard — "any advertising structure that directs persons to a different location from where the billboard is located or which is otherwise 'off-premises' but makes no reference to a location."

design and construction of the project.

Once the property is transferred to the SDOC, the contract states that the county acknowledges that the school district and TCTC intend to enter a lease or similar arrangement with the technical college's right to occupy and use the project.

The third and final public hearing on tonight's agenda relates to a lease agreement between the county and the Fair-Oak Youth Center Inc., which will take over the former Oakway Intermediate School property for a variety of recreational and

community activities.

The Fair-Oak Youth Center will lease the 29.423-acre tract for a term of 20 years for a nominal sum, while agreeing to be responsible for any and all taxes, fees and assessments.

For the first two years of the agreement, the contract stipulates, the county will continue to be responsible for utility charges such as water, heat, gas, electricity and trash disposal, while the Fair-Oak Youth Center will assume responsibility for those charges in year three.