

OCONEE COUNTY

Council finalizes deal for record project

BorgWarner set for \$71.9M expansion

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WALHALLA — County council finalized an incentive package Tuesday for Oconee's largest announced capital investment not related to Duke Energy, as BorgWarner was revealed as the company planning a record-breaking expansion locally.

The expansion, previously referred to in council chambers under the code name Project Maxwell, will create 163 jobs in addition to the \$71.9 million in capital investment, though 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 associated ordinance, which puts into place a fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement that provides a fixed millage and reduced 6 percent tax assess-

SEE RECORD, PAGE A3

RECORD: Fifth time company has expanded here

FROM PAGE A1

ment ratio, as well as special source revenue credits for the company, passed third and final reading unanimously.

The project represents the fifth time since 2012 BorgWarner has chosen to expand its operations in Oconee, including a \$25 million expansion that created 30 jobs in 2012, a \$24.68 million expansion that created 105 jobs in 2013, 45 new jobs announced in 2014 and a \$13.35 million expansion that created 51 jobs in 2015.

The Oconee Economic Alliance has worked since November 2016 on the project, which surpasses two previous \$60 million announcements by BASF as the county's record capital investment from

a manufacturing standpoint.

"To me, this shows BorgWarner's commitment to Oconee and that the business climate is healthy here for their desired growth," OEA executive director Richard Blackwell told The Journal. "This is a global company that could grow anywhere, but time and time again they decide that Oconee is 'just right.'"

Councilman Paul Cain thanked BorgWarner for its investment and job creation in the county.

"They could've chosen to go anywhere in this world, and they chose to go right here in Oconee County," he said.

Councilman Julian Davis said he also appreciates the company's investment.

"I think it speaks volumes to

the workforce that they're able to have here in Oconee County, and that helps with the investment when you've got good workforce," he said. "And I appreciate all the good work they're doing with the training of everybody who continues to work for BorgWarner."

During the public hearing for the ordinance, Westminster resident Jerry Barnett called BorgWarner a "perfect example of an industry choosing its own site and not being a burden on the taxpayers of Oconee County."

"I hope that in the future you can find some way to get us out of the land business and the development business that's sucking the life out of this county and encourage these industries to choose their own site and stand on

their own two feet," he said. "We don't need any more burdens like we're getting with these industrial parks."

The announcement will also mark the first time the county has surpassed \$100 million in new investment for a calendar year through economic development efforts, as the previous high was \$89.9 million in 2016.

The project increases the county's year-to-date total to \$153,229,800 in new capital investment and newly announced jobs to 365 for 2017. In the last 20 months, Oconee has ushered in \$243.2 million in new capital investment dollars and 478 new jobs through 11 total economic development projects.