

Word expected soon on Seneca Rail Park grant



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WALHALLA — News on a \$500,000 grant centered on the Seneca Rail Park is expected within the next 10 weeks.

Oconee County Council made a financial commitment

providing matching funds this week for a South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority grant focused on the Seneca Rail Park. The matching funds from the county are for up to \$300,000.

The SCRIA grant is

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Final word on a \$500,000 grant for the Seneca Rail Park is expected in the next 10 weeks, according to Oconee Economic Alliance interim executive director Janet Hartman. On Tuesday, Oconee County Council approved matching funds up to \$300,000 should the grant receive final approval.

GRANT: Infrastructure needed

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for \$500,000 for sewer and water infrastructure for the Seneca Rail Park.

Oconee Economic Alliance interim executive director Janet Hartman said the state grant deadline was March 11, adding it could take 10 weeks to get a final decision.

“We have one economic development project serious about locating in the park, but they are waiting to see the commitment of the county to begin construction of the entrance road and what the resolution to water and sewer will be,” she said. “I believe potential companies look to see the commitment of the county to make the rail park more marketable prior to the company making their own investment.”

Oconee County owns the Seneca Rail Park, a 111-acre industrial park located along Shiloh Road. Sewer and water lines run to the edge of the property, but no water or sewer runs within the park. The city of Seneca owns the adjacent Propex building. The park has a rail spur and has been marketed for its potential to ship via the railroad to the inland port in Greer.

Hartman said council approval was a good step for economic development.

“Improvements to the Seneca Rail Park have been on the economic development radar for some time now,” Hartman said. “It has been known an entrance road and water and sewer inside the park would be necessary for any company to commit to locating in the park. Plans have been progressing in this direction, and an entrance road has been designed and trees have been cleared.”

Hartman added funding for an en-

trance has been secured and the project has been bid through the county procurement office.

“A master plan to bring water and sewer infrastructure into the park has been designed along with a cost estimate,” she said. “Knowing this infrastructure would be a needed component to make the park marketable to future companies, the county and OEA researched available funding sources. Our project met the criteria needed for the SCRIA economic infrastructure grant program.”

According to the meeting agenda, Seneca commissioned a master plan to get water and sewer into the park.

The plan has been split into two phases, with estimated construction costs for Phase 1 estimated at \$763,650, including engineering, design, permitting and construction of water and gravity sewer lines.

If approved, the \$500,000 grant would help offset the construction costs.

Oconee County and the Oconee Economic Alliance applied for the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority grant.

“The Seneca Rail Park is one of three industrial parks located within Oconee County, and the only rail-served park in the county, with a dedicated rail spur for a Norfolk Southern line,” Hartman said. “We are one of the few rail-served industrial parks in the Upstate, and we have a unique opportunity to recruit companies that need rail service to operate. Having this park ready with the needed infrastructure gives us a great advantage with prospective clients.”