

# Oconee Economic Alliance looking to find new home

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR  
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — At its first meeting of 2020, the Oconee Economic Alliance announced plans to be in a new office building by the end of next year.

Alliance president Annie Caggiano revealed the group's action plan for the new year, which includes forming a committee to identify a new office space to be filled by the end of 2021.

"We're really hoping

we can develop a working committee within the board, or within



Caggiano

our supporters and community partners, to figure out where's the best place for us to live," Caggiano said.

"I think it's a way we can even create some economic development wherever we land."

Caggiano said the

SEE ALLIANCE, PAGE A5

move could be into an existing building.

The organization's current office is in the Piedmont Center on U.S. Highway 123, clustered with other businesses. Caggiano said part of the need for a different office space is to bring in its business incubator for entrepreneurs, which is currently located in downtown Walhalla, and having more space to entertain clients.

"We think having a standalone place within the county would give us that recognition within the community and the partners we work with, too," Caggiano said.

The alliance also expressed the desire to complete a new five-year strategic plan by the end of the year.

Caggiano said the OEA, created in 2012, had its strategic plan expire two years ago.

"When you look at the economy over the last five years, even much less 10 years,

## ICE: 'A lot has changed'

a lot has changed, especially in how companies site facilities, and a lot has changed in Oconee County, so that's the stuff that we need to look at the data (for)," she said. "The data will tell us where we need to go over the next five years. ... We feel like a strategic plan will help us collect that data and lay out the plan for the next five years."

She estimated the cost of a strategic plan to be between \$80,000 and \$95,000.

Caggiano said the OEA has spoken with fellow counties that are similar in size for advice on forming a new strategic plan.

Caggiano told members

the alliance's goal was to have half of the strategic plan funded through grant money.

"Laurens County, who we would consider a peer county, they're currently going through a strategic plan and are set up very much like we are," she said. "They let us look at some of the stuff they're working on, so we're going to issue a request for qualifications and work with those consultants that we feel like matches the personality of the county and the personality of the office to lay out the plan together. It will be an open process."

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