

# County releases money for Salem water line project

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR  
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Salem now has teeth in beginning its long-discussed water line extension project after Oconee County officials released funding to start work.

There was no opposition from Oconee County Council to

making a slight tweak to the designation of \$210,000 in money from grant matching funds to undesignated funds to help build and install a booster pump station in the Shallow Ford Road area last month. The station would increase the source water capacity to the northern portion of

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Salem's system by more than 250 percent, according to Salem director of operations Ryan Hardin. Construction of the Fall Creek Source Water Station is projected to cost \$640,992,40.

Hardin said he hoped a bid package for the project would be awarded on July 1.

"That would allow construction to begin, hopefully, in early fall to be completed late fall, early winter," Hardin told council.

Council first earmarked the money almost two years ago in May 2019. It was first discussed as an economic development project in July 2018, which led to questions springing up whether the project would unfairly benefit

former council chairwoman Edda Cammick, who has property in the area of the proposed water line extension.

During a recent meeting, Councilman Julian Davis reflected on his initial thoughts nearly three years ago.

"It was quite — I guess — an interesting way of promoting what this was," Davis said to Hardin. "I met with you, went over everything and quickly learned exactly what this project was and the impact it had on there. Sometimes it would be, 'Oh, I had a change in heart.' No, I understood the project more. ... I just wanted to state that I appreciate the presentation y'all have given and continuing the fight for this."

Councilman Glenn Hart,

who sided with Cammick at the time of the dispute, told Hardin, "I was with you from the beginning."

"It wasn't, 'No, I didn't understand,' or anything like that," Hart said. "When I (saw) it presented, I knew what it was and I was for you. ... That's it. Thank you."

### REMAINING FUNDS ALREADY IN PLACE

Salem has already designated \$215,922 in cash for the project. The final piece of the puzzle was reported on earlier this month by The Journal, with the town being selected to receive \$216,000 in funding from the State Revolving Fund Program, which is under the jurisdiction of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, the S.C. Rural infrastruc-

ture Authority and the Office of Local Government. The project qualified for principal loan forgiveness, and the town will not be required to repay the loan due to the program essentially being an extension of federal grant dollars.

The project has been discussed for nearly 20 years.

The project involves two phases that will include a 2.3-mile pipeline extension and cost approximately \$1.2 million. The second phase would install more than 1,000 linear feet of water main across S.C. Highway 11. The installation of a water line along S.C. Highway 11 would come in Phase 3, adding 12,100 feet of water main, according to documents provided to The Journal.

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