

Economic development project to create

215 new jobs

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — An Atlanta-based company that manufactures modular homes plans to invest \$30 million in Oconee County over the next five years, creating 215 new jobs.

Officials from Oconee County and Impact Housing Group gathered Tues-

day morning at the future site of the complex at the Oconee Industry and Technology Park (OITP) for a groundbreaking ceremony for the project formerly known as Ruby Slipper. Company president and CEO Cecil Phillips told The Journal he expected construction to finish next July on the 140,000-square-foot building.

“They made us feel wel-

come, first of all,” he said when asked why the company chose Oconee. “Not every community that we talked to did that. Some of them, they kind of take you for granted. ... It was really the people.”

Phillips stressed the importance of the affordability of modular homes in a time when the average

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home price in the U.S. is around \$400,000. He told the crowd at the ceremony that a modular home is not a mobile or trailer home and that it is built in house at the factory. Phillips predicted the Westminster location will eventually be building 80-100 houses a month.

“There’s nothing cheap about the physics or physical integrity of what we build,” Phillips said. “You’re going to see modular addressed more and more in this country.”

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

The groundbreaking ceremony drew numerous local officials, including South Carolina State Senate President Thomas Alexander, School District of Oconee County superintendent Michael Thorsland, county administrator Amanda Brock, Oconee County Councilmen Paul Cain, Julian Davis and John Elliott, Westminster city administrator Kevin Bronson, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative president Jim Lovinggood and former Oconee Economic Alliance director Annie Caggiano.

Recently minted OEA president Jamie Gilbert credited Brock, Caggiano and project manager Tyler James for their roles in landing Impact Housing late last year. Gilbert also championed Alexander as “a tremendous friend, partner and ally” for his

work in representing Oconee in Columbia.

“I can’t stress enough how important it is for a county like Oconee that, in my opinion, over the years that has done the right thing,” Gilbert said. “We’ve acquired property, we’ve put the infrastruc-

ture in, we’ve improved the properties by clearing and grading here at OITP.

“These projects are here because we prepared this site.”

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Coordinating Council for Economic Development awarded Oconee County a \$250,000 set-aside grant to help with the costs of site preparation and building construction, a release from the South Carolina Department of Commerce said Tuesday. Oconee sold 27 acres within OITP to Impact Housing for \$270,000 last year.

“With their expertise in affordable housing, Impact Housing Group will be a great addition to the state and Oconee County,” Gov. Henry McMaster said. “We welcome them to South Carolina.”

Cain said the county “couldn’t be more excited and appreciative that Im-

Impact Housing Group has chosen our community for their new manufacturing facility.”

“It is a testament to the county’s excellent business climate and a workforce that supports a number of diverse manufacturing operations, as well as the availability of key training partners, such as Tri-County Tech, Hamilton Career Center and the efforts of Oconee Economic Alliance,” he said.

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Sen. Thomas Alexander shakes hands with Impact Housing Group president and CEO Cecil Phillips after the groundbreaking ceremony for Impact’s planned Oconee County facility on Tuesday.



Oconee County and Impact Housing Group officials participated in a groundbreaking for the company’s planned complex at the Oconee Industry and Technology Park in Westminster on Tuesday.

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