

County council set to vote on \$1.5M industrial park request

Oconee officials signal confidence in filling park

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — After the county's economic

development director recently said he was committed to transforming the Golden Corner Commerce Park (GCCP),

Oconee County Council will decide whether to spend \$1.5 million for the work.

The big-ticket agenda item, which will be voted on near the end of council's meeting at 6 p.m. tonight in council chambers at 415 S. Pine St., asks the county to commit \$1.5 million to clear and grade land, with the mon-

ey to be "combined with other grant funds that exceed the requested county funding, to be made available to Oconee County for this project in the near future." The phrasing of the sentence in the meeting agenda offers a window into the county's confidence it will be suc-

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cessful in winning grant money as it tries to grade 60 to 90 acres of the park that already has water, sewer, electric and natural gas infrastructure in place. The entrance of the site has frequently looked unkempt and overgrown, something county officials say has turned off prospective investors.

Oconee bought the 322-acre park in Fair Play for \$1.8 million in 2005. The park is 2 miles off Interstate 85. In early 2020, Project Aztec — a proposed solar farm operation — was rumored to be coming to the park, but the deal never came together.

"The inability to secure one or more businesses at GCCP can be directly tied to the property's undeveloped and raw status," the agenda item reads. "No work has been done to prepare the property for development and is a major consideration when businesses are evaluating locations in multiple states."

The Journal reported last week that Oconee Economic Alliance director Jamie Gilbert had applied for \$300,000 from the South Carolina Department of Commerce for site enhancements at GCCP. Gilbert said at a July groundbreaking event at the Oconee Industry and Technology

Park (OITP) — which has steadily been filling up with companies in recent years — he expected a similar progression for GCCP after grading work.

"Once that property is prepared, you will see that same activity that we've seen here in the last two to three years," he said. "I will tell you in the next six to eight months, that site will have significant acreage out there ready to go. That property will be gone in a very short time, and we have a plan to do that."

OTHER BUSINESS

In addition, county administrator Amanda Brock will ask council tonight to approve \$273,638 to expand parking at the regional airport to accommodate for increased traffic to the facility. — The item was previously planned for in the current fiscal budget.

Westminster city administrator Kevin Bronson is expected to speak before council about American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding at tonight's meeting. Oconee has already awarded the

city \$1.3 million for water system improvements with the federal aid.

Council will also vote on second reading to add \$550,000 in ARPA money to Salem for a water line extension project that is now estimated to cost \$2.55 million. There is also a resolution to "pledge Oconee Coun-

ty's support in the fight against homelessness" on the meeting agenda.

Council will meet in executive session for a personnel matter about the human resources department and two economic development projects — Project Wash and Project Badge, according to the agenda.

SPECIAL MEETING THIS MORNING

Council is also scheduled to convene for a special meeting at 10 a.m. in chambers to talk about "funding options for Oconee County Capital Projects," according to an agenda.

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