Econ official: Oconee a finalist for $1B project deciding this summer

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County's top economic official said Tuesday the county is one of two finalists for a $1 billion project that would create more than 1,000 jobs.

Oconee Economic Alliance director Jamie Gilbert said at the Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting this week the company was one of a handful of the "hottest projects" "front and center" for the county. He said Project Wash, which was talked about in an executive session last year, is deciding between Oconee and "another location" in either June or July.

Gilbert

"That's the big one," Gilbert said.

He said the other projects to keep an eye on included EVPack, Feather and Winter. Gilbert was on hand for the meeting to provide an annual economic development update, less than a year after he started on the job. He shared that Dutch manufacturer CurTec would be opening in the Oconee Industry and Technology Park (OITP) off S.C. Highway 11 in Westminster by the end of the year. The project

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will create 32 new full-time jobs in Oconee over a five-year period through a $10.4 million investment in a 34,000-square-foot building.

Impact Housing Group will also be opening a 140,000-square-foot facility in OITP to build modular homes in a $30 million project by the end of the year. Gilbert said the project will create 215 new jobs.

RESOLUTIONS APPROVED

County council signed off on resolutions at its regular meeting on Tuesday night to start the formal three-reading process for EVPack and Project Made. County attorney David Root called the resolutions "comfort letters" for the companies.

EVPack would be required to invest $42 million and create 120 new full-time jobs to receive a fee-in-lieu-of-tax incentive (FILOT) of a 6 percent assessment ratio and a fixed millage rate. The county would receive a special source revenue credit (SSRC) of 45 percent for the first nine years of the deal, 40 percent for the next eight years and 35 percent in the following eight years. A special source revenue credit is a tax abatement tool used as a reimbursement mechanism to reward companies for infrastructure investment.

Project Made would require a $10.8 million aggregate taxable investment and 25 new full-time jobs, backup agenda material shows. The FILOT would include a 6 percent assessment ratio and fixed millage rate over a 10-year

FILE

State Senate President Thomas Alexander of Walhalla shakes hands with Impact Housing Group president and CEO Cecil Philips during a groundbreaking ceremony for the company's new facility in the Oconee Industry and Technology Park in August. Oconee Economic Alliance director Jamie Gilbert told county officials Tuesday that Impact Housing is one of two companies set to open at OITP by the end of this year.