



SPOTLIGHT ON OCONEE

Oconee County has many significant activities ongoing each and every day. In an effort to keep you, the taxpayer, informed on the progress of these projects, this monthly report will appear on this web-site. If you desire additional details regarding any of these topics, please give me a call. Our intention is to keep you as informed as possible on our progress.

Thank you for visiting this site. Your comments will be appreciated.

Chairman Melvin Davis

Economic Development

On January 1, 2006, Planning and Economic Development Director Matt Forshee relinquished his responsibilities as Planning Director to concentrate exclusively on Economic Development. He will occupy an office next to Administrative Officer Alan Theriault on the second floor of the Oconee County Courthouse. B. R. White, formerly Assistant Planning Director, has been promoted to Planning Director.

Some of the items Mr. Forshee will be working on include the following as recommended by the economic development study done in 2005 by Basile Baumann Prost and Associates:

- Create a single county presence for Economic Development that coordinates all ED activities within the county;
- Develop a marketing plan to sell the county's potential for new businesses through a branding strategy, updated web site, marketing mission tours, direct mailings;
- Develop small business and entrepreneur activities and programs to help these types of businesses succeed;
- Develop an information clearing house of data for Site Selectors and Real Estate Professionals;
- Showcase "Arts Industries" as business/tourism. Promote arts tourism in Oconee.

Board Action - January 3, 2006

The Board of Commissioners filled the following vacancies:

Oconee Development Authority -- Rick Waller, Insurance Agency Owner, term expiration 12-31-2006

Planning Commission -- Dr. William Steen, Environmental Consultant, term expiration 9-30-2007

Board of Tax Assessors -- Todd Paschal, Chief Tax Appraiser, term expiration 3-31-2012

The Board of Commissioners approved a **transportation agreement with the Oconee Board of Education** to provide transportation for Oconee students in the primary, elementary and middle schools to county recreational facilities for after-school programs. A maximum of two buses and their drivers will be provided under this agreement at a cost of \$1333.34 per week to be paid in quarterly installments to the BOE by the county. Any changes to this agreement must be agreed upon in writing by both parties. The contract must still be

approved by the Board of Education. This agreement will eliminate the need for the County to purchase and maintain buses and hire drivers (salaries and benefits) for them.

A \$114,000 bid was accepted from **LandAir Mapping**, Inc. to provide the county with topographical digital imaging for our GIS Mapping Department. It is expected that the information will be viable for eight to ten years and be beneficial for economic development promotion. This aerial photography will be a joint endeavor with Morgan County to minimize cost.

Heritage Construction Group, Inc. was approved for the **Highway 186/Dials Mill Road watermain extension** project at a bid of \$932,562.

Upon the unanimous recommendation of Sheriff Berry, Precision Planning, and project manager Wayne Wilbanks, the BOC voted to sever its construction management relationship on the new **jail / E 911 project** with P. R. Brown Construction and move to New South Construction. New South Construction is based in Atlanta, Georgia and finished a close second in the original construction management selection process. Peter R. Brown Construction, based in Florida, was unable to provide the responses or priority that Oconee County desired or that they wished to provide due to circumstances in its Florida office. The agreement to sever the relationship between Peter R. Brown Construction and the BOC was mutually agreed upon. It is anticipated that the project will incur a delay of approximately six weeks, but New South Construction is diligently reviewing drawings and specifications and will provide a new subcontractor bid date in the very near future.

Utility Department

The Oconee County Board of Commissioners approved its first **Water Improvement District** in November of 2005 in response to a petition by the residents of Birchmore Hills. This will provide the residents with county water and fire protection not presently available from the private utility company serving the area.

A Water Improvement District will function in the same way a Street Light Tax District functions – residents of the affected area are assessed an extra fee that is added on to their tax bill to pay for the service provided.

Projects completed:

Sewer

Upgrades to two county lift stations that serve our commercial area on Epps Bridge Parkway were completed in December.

Water

A 2” water-main on Acorn Court in Oak Point Subdivision was replaced.

Projects to begin soon:

- Installation of a 16” water-main on SR 186 in North High Shoals. This installation will close an existing system loop and will improve system pressure, fire flow capacity and water quality.
- Installation of a 16” water-main on Dials Mill Road, which will provide an additional feed from the Bear Creek Treatment Plant to Oconee County. This line will also close an existing loop, which will increase flows and improve water pressure.

Water Availability Issues

Oconee County is reviewing all alternatives and should have a report from our consultant by the end of January. We want to make sure we have the necessary water supply for our future needs, but want to be conservative with our expenditures. The Hard Labor Creek alternative indicates that Oconee’s cost will be

\$110,000,000 over a 50-year period for 12 million gallons per day.

Parks & Recreation – Winter 2006

Activities

Youth Basketball – 502 participants divided over 52 teams

Teen Intramural League –114 participants (11 teams of boys and 3 teams of girls)

Adult Basketball – 9 teams participating in Church League A and B

After-School Program

The after-school programs remain very strong with 133 children enrolled. The Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education are finalizing an agreement to have the children transported by school buses to Herman C. Michael Park.

Spring registration, which includes Spring Soccer, will begin February 6, 2006. Online registration is available at <http://www.oconeecounty.net/>.

Public Works

Roads and Bridges

Repaired

- Tappan Spur Road

Repaired and resurfaced

- Lane Creek Road - 2.1 miles
- Elder Road - 2.1 miles
- Cemetery Road - 0.9 miles

Replacement of the culvert and bridge on J T Elder Road will begin as weather permits. Steel for the bridge will be acquired through arrangement with GDOT's bridge rebuilding program.

Maintenance activities are ongoing through the winter months. These include scraping and gravel for dirt roads, tree limb pick-up (especially after ice storms) and replacement of missing or damaged signs.

Storm Water Control

Proposed storm water ordinances are currently being revised prior to issuance for public comment.

Sanitation

Christmas trees are currently being collected at all county collection sites.

Code Enforcement

Activities - September 1 thru December 31, 2006

- 275 building permits were issued
- 1392 inspections were performed
- 28 commercial plans were reviewed (17 of these were remodels)
- 48 complaints were resolved

Forty individuals participated in the county's Soil Erosion Information Sessions (3 sessions were held). Three county inspectors received certification as Soil Erosion Inspectors.