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Seneca aims to keep Pioneer as customer

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SENECA — The city of Seneca is in the process of restructuring its contract with the Pioneer Water District in an effort to make sure it doesn't lose any business to other wholesale providers or make the district's option of maintaining its plant look more attractive.

Pioneer, which provides water to much of southern Oconee County, purchases water on the wholesale market from two main in-county suppliers: Seneca and Westminster.

The amount the district purchases from each entity is a fluid scenario

and not formulaic, with the prices determining how much is purchased from either city.

Utilities Director Bob Fairles said Wednesday that he was discussing with Pioneer General Manager Terry Pruitt a new contract that could be more easily predictive of future price fluctuations to make the deal more attractive.

City Administrator Greg Dietzen said that while Pioneer's payment to Seneca obviously fluctuates with usage, the contract is usually worth an average of \$20,000 or more a month.

"Terry is looking at it, and rightfully so, as 'Is it better for us to have our own plant or is it better

for us to keep wholesaling water?'" Fairles asked.

Earlier this year, Fair Play residents were up in arms when the district appeared to be taking steps toward developing its own water treatment plant in the area.

Fairles said he hopes a restructured contract with the city will make any other considerations for water supply unnecessary.

"We're talking and trying to come up with something we can hang our hats on. I told them 'You don't really want the headache of running a plant, and I don't want to lose a customer, so let's make this thing work.'"

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