

# A lot riding on

## Officials confident of meeting May 1 state deadline

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WALHALLA — They saved the best for last. Tyler Technologies, Inc. employees are in the final

leg of Oconee County's reassessment of property values, and yes, they've saved the best for last.

Field workers are now canvassing Lake Keowee homes outside of Seneca.

These are, for the most part, upscale and elaborate homes.

Some of them sit on lakefront lots that eager buyers hardly blinked at paying up to \$500,000 for to build dream homes on. Homeowners and commercial property holders are anxiously awaiting the results of Oconee's

reassessment. The values assigned these properties will eventually determine the amount of property taxes owners will pay when the county's millage rate is set.

And, with a preliminary budget due before Oconee County Council at the end of this month, county officials are anxiously

# reassessment

## REASSES

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awaiting the results as well, because they will determine whether property tax revenues will go up or down.

With the final figures not expected before May 1, County Administrator Scott Moulder has said he will have to make certain "assumptions" when he prepares a preliminary

draft budget.

Tyler has said nothing about its findings to-date and Moulder is not offering much in the way of findings ... if he knows.

He did say he would likely assume assessments will come in lower than they did in 2006.

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Values were spiking, ..... the recent recession when loose lending practices by mortgage lenders sent the economy and the housing market crashing down.

Many personal investment portfolios and retirement nest eggs were wiped out. Investment properties were foreclosed and others lost their primary residences because they were out of work.

What impact foreclosures will have in lowering total reassessment values remains to be seen.

Reassessment comes every five years, and just about every county in South Carolina handles the appraisals in-house through the County Assessor's Office.

Not Oconee. Apparently the Oconee Assessor's Office was not prepared for the undertaking that began last year. Not wanting to risk another reassessment fiasco as happened five years earlier when thousands appealed their appraisals,

the County Council voted to hire a private company — Tyler Technologies — to do the job. The cost was \$1.8 million.

Luther Nicholson, Tyler's project manager for Oconee's reassessment, said the job is 99 percent

## MENT: Many await outcome

completed and remains on target to meet the May 1 deadline for submitting proposed appraisal values to the state Department of Revenue.

If for any reason Tyler is unable to meet the deadline, then Oconee could request an extension from DOR.

Once DOR approves Oconee's new property values, then the next step would be to mail out information to property owners

on or about July 1. Once the notifications are received, property owners have 90 days to file a written appeal if they disagree with the appraisal.

In the meantime, Nicholson said the knocking on doors is in its final stages as workers conduct site inspections of properties.

"We still have time to put the final touches on this," Nicholson said.

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