

Auditor to propose tax decrease

Oconee council voted down 1.9-mill drop last year

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — After county council voted down his recommendation to lower taxes this time last year, Oconee auditor Ken Nix will give its members another chance to do so tonight. Nix told The Journal on Mon-

day he will be recommending a 1.8-mill decrease to council during his presentation on county millage for tax year 2015 at tonight's scheduled meeting.



Nix

The decrease would represent a

1-mill reduction in the county mill — equal to \$4 in savings per \$100,000 in value of a primary residence — and 0.8-mill decrease in the School District of Oconee County mill.

Nix declined to elaborate on whether his proposal meant the value of a county mill had increased, but said he had a "good

bit of information" to present to council and the public.

Last September, council shot down Nix's proposal to lower taxes by 1.9 mills despite his assurances both the county and school district's budgets would have still been fully funded.

Thus, Oconee's total millage remained at 215, with 141.1 going to its schools and 73.9 going to fund the county.

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DECREASE: Set to be proposed at county council meeting tonight

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In June, council approved a balanced budget for fiscal year 2016 that included flat \$1,200 raises for all county staff without dipping into Oconee's reserve fund balance.

A day earlier, the Oconee school board gave final approval to a balanced budget of \$90,437,470, but finance director Gloria Moore said the balanced budget, which included no tax increase, is dependent on the mill value increasing.

While the budget has

the district spending \$90.4 million for FY 2016 as opposed to the \$91.8 million budget from last fiscal year, the school board said last year it wanted administration to find ways to reduce the budget over a two-year period.

By the 2016-17 school year, the school district hopes to operate under a zero budget deficit and to not have to draw from the district's fund balance.

Nix's presentation at tonight's meeting is to present his recommended millage rate to fund those

budgets based on revenue estimates. Council will then vote to either accept his recommendation or, as was the case last year, go another route.

Millage approval is required to fund FY 2016 for not only the county and school district's operational budgets, including Tri-County Technical College, but also bond payments for the county and SDOC, and Keowee Fire District millage.

Tonight's council meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m.

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