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Company must get it right

2006 reassessment in Oconee still a bad memory

***Editor's note:** This is the first of a four part series exploring this year's re-appraisal of properties in Oconee County.*



A series: Price of pricing property through the roof

■ **Tuesday:** What is the Tyler company, and what is its track record?

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — In the coming weeks, a private company getting paid more than $1.8 million by Oconee County to do its reassessment, will begin hiring and training area residents to go out and personally inspect all of the county's residential and commercial properties.

Tyler Technologies, Inc., a publicly traded company with headquarters in Dayton, Ohio and Dallas, Texas, is a nationally recognized provider of software and services to local government, including appraisal.

Since officially getting the Oconee contract in late March, Tyler recently set up its base of operations at a makeshift compound at the Oconee County Administrative complex on Pine Street in Walhalla.

Luther Nicholson of Spartanburg, a Tyler employee for more than 20 years, is the project manager heading the temporary reassessment headquarters. He has already hired two office workers and expects to hire another 15 to 20 employees, including data collectors, to do Oconee's reassessment.

"We came in four weeks ago to start setting up the office," Nicholson said this week. "We've been familiarizing ourselves with the county, and one of the ways to do that is drive around. We've got a tremendous amount of work to do in a year."

In South Carolina, counties are required to do a complete reassessment of property values every five years. According to the Department of Revenue, 15 of the state's 46 counties, including Oconee, are reappraising properties this year to implement the new values in 2011.

The most recent reappraisals in Oconee

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■ Wednesday: What impact will foreclosures have on reassessment? What did Pickens County find?

■ Thursday: How will Tyler handle appeals? Will elected officials' heads be on the line if things get messy as it did in 2006?

■ What does a reassessment of property values entail? See page A5

Reassessment primer could save money

Property owners should be well-documented before filing appeal



Reassessment 2010:
The high price of pricing property

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — A little basic information about reassessment could help homeowners and businesses challenge a valuation they think might be out of whack.

South Carolina law created the office of the county assessor, which has responsibility for the appraisal and assessment of all real estate located in the county.

The only things the county assessor is not responsible for are railroads, utility companies and manufacturers, which are assessed by the South Carolina Department of Revenue.

The Oconee County Assessor's Office is responsible for the appraisal of more than 65,000 real estate parcels with a market value of about $7 billion.

A countywide reassessment is carried out every five years.

Nearly 5,000 informal appeals from homeowners and businesses that questioned their appraisal were filed in 2006.

State legislation that went into effect in 2007 has changed some of the ground rules governing reassessment.

One of the changes is the increase in the school operations tax exemption on owner occupied legal residences from $100,000 to an unlimited amount. That loss of local revenue to schools was to be replaced by a one-cent increase in sales tax.

The other major change is the law capping value increases at 15 percent between reassessment programs.

Assessed values are usually based on the latest sale price of the property. This initial assessment is then increased during reappraisal based on the overall increase in property values in the area.

Typically, a home's assessed valuation is based on the property's market value determined by the assessor, who uses comparable sales in the valuation.

Taxpayers that decide to appeal their reappraisal should be armed with their own selected comparable sales and photos showing the condition of the property to make a case for a lower valuation. Experts say the key to prevailing in an appeal is to be well-documented.

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