County looking at biggest revenue hike in 6 years

BY NORMAN CANNADA
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Oconee County's proposed 2013-14 fiscal year budget includes requests for about $1.5 million in new revenues — an amount nearly equal to the total new revenue raised in the previous six budgets – since 2007.

Revenue received for Oconee County government services has increased by more than $14.5 million in the past 10 years, but just over $1.5 million since the 2007 tax year.

That $1.5 million is nearly as much as the amount County Administrator Scott Moulder is seeking to balance a shortfall in the 2013-14 fiscal year budget. If approved, the money generated next fiscal year would amount to a little more than the $1.47 million revenue jump between 2010 and 2011 – the largest since 2007 so far.

Moulder has proposed a 1.2-mil increase and a $15 per vehicle road maintenance fee or a 3-mil increase with 2.1 mils dedicated only to road paving and maintenance. Without the increases – estimated to bring in between $1.5 million and $1.6 million – Moulder says cuts will have to come in county services such as convenience centers, road paving and staff positions.

Information provided by County Auditor Ken Nix showed the total millage assessed for county government services in the past decade has risen from 68 mils in the 2003 tax year to 71.9 in the 2012 budget year.

The millage covers all county government services such as general budget and debt services including the $17 million in bonds for a new jail.

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HIKE: The millage covers all county government services

Mils assessed for the School District of Oconee County are separate from these figures.

Revenue generated by one mil dropped from $509,276 in 2011 to $496,627 in 2012, the only time that occurred in the 10-year span. It was also less than the revenue generated by a mil in 2010 – $502,038. Total revenue in the current county budget received from millage is $35,707,401, down almost $1 million from the $36,616,944 the previous year.

Nix said he was not aware of any other time in the county when the revenue generated by one mil decreased from one year to the next.

"I think it was for more than just the Duke Assessment modification (which dropped by $10 million)," Moulder said of the $198 million drop in money generated by one mil in the 2012 budget year. "I think that the reduction was compounded by the decrease in overall property assessment from 2010's reassessment."

Millage assessed for all county government rose from 68 mils in the 2003 tax year to a high of 78.1 mils in the 2007 tax year. During those years, the total revenue generated by county government millage assessments grew from $21.15 million to $34.2 million, an increase of nearly $127,000 per mil over that time period.

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Looking back: 10 years of Oconee millage

TAX YEAR	REVENUE FROM A MILL	COUNTY MILLAGE	REVENUE GENERATED
2003	$311,136	68.0	$21,157,248
2004	$318,348	70.6	$22,465,369
2005	$351,771	75.6	$26,593,888
2006	$418,708	73.0	$30,565,684
2007	$438,081	78.1	$34,214,126
2008	$457,312	75.2	$34,389,862
2009	$481,048	72.9	$35,068,399
2010	$502,038	70.0	$35,142,660
2011	$509,276	71.9	$36,616,944
2012	$496,627	71.9	$35,707,481