County spending to top $124 million

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WALHALLA — By the time the Oconee County Council gets through approving three spending ordinances for the new 2009-10 fiscal year tonight, county taxpayers will be on the hook for more than $124 million.

The big number is a reflection of just how big and wealthy Oconee County has become.

County Council is expected to approve the three spending measures, which include a General Fund budget of $42.6 million.

Taxpayers also are being asked to underwrite funding for the school district ($73 million, including $16.6 million in school debt), Tri-County Tech ($972,117) and the Keowee Fire Special District ($657,100).

Aside from the general fund, Oconee sets aside money for the Capital Projects Fund ($676,300); Special Revenue Fund ($1.2 million); Enterprise Fund ($3.1 million); and the Debt Service Fund ($1.6 million).

A comparison between Oconee and Laurens and Greenwood, two other Upstate counties of similar size and population, shows that Oconee brings in significantly more revenue than its Upstate neighbors, but also outspends them.

According to data compiled by the South Carolina Association of Counties, in 2007 Oconee had assessed property value of $457.1 million compared to Laurens' $162.4 million and $261.1 million for Greenwood.

Oconee had total revenue in 2007 of $47.2 million, while Laurens and Greenwood pulled in $26.4 million and $32.2 million, respectively.

By the same token, Oconee had total expenditures of $39.7 million while Laurens spent $35.9 million and Greenwood a frugal $24.2 million.

County Council also is expected to approved an ordinance that amends spending in the 2008-09 budget to include financing of three fire trucks.

Oconee County Auditor-Elect Ken Nix, who officially takes over the duties of the office July 1, is expected to provide millage information to council in late August.

Tenth Circuit Family Court Judge Timothy Cain will administer the oath of office to Nix and County Treasurer Greg Nowell prior to the County Council meeting on July 7.