Oconee council to hear proposed millage tonight

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
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WALHALLA — Oconee County Council will review the proposed county millage for 2014-15 at its 6 p.m. meeting tonight in council chambers.

Council approval is required to set the millage to fund the county and the School District of Oconee County for fiscal year 2015, as well as Tri-County Technical College, special projects such as economic development and bridges and culverts, bond payments for the county and SDOC, and Keowee Fire District Millage.

The millage is set in September for timely processing of tax notices beginning in October as set forth by the S.C. Department of Revenue (DOR).

County millage was set at 212.1 for incorporated areas and 215.0 in unincorporated areas for FY 2014. The 2.9 mils are exempted by the county for fire services for residents within city limits.

County auditor Ken Nix released the assessment numbers from DOR last month that valued Duke Energy's Oconee Nuclear Station at $118.6 million — a net decrease of $9.5 million from a year ago, according to Nix.

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MILLAGE: Duke value could have an effect

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At the time, Nix said Duke's tax bill could not be calculated until county council sets the millage, but Duke's taxes will run approximately $24.7 million this year, down from $27.4 million.

"Naturally, the drastic drop can affect (property taxes)," Nix told The Journal.

Administrator Scott Moulder said then he didn't expect to recommend a tax increase as a result of the decrease in the Duke assessment.

"We have to factor in the increase we had in real property, and we saw an increase in real property," Moulder said. "The impact from what I understand is a 0.2-mil difference, so it's not a huge impact. I'll probably propose we keep the millage the same."

Also on the council agenda tonight is the first and final reading of an ordinance to authorize a fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement for an economic development matter dubbed "Project Plume" that involves an investment of "not less than" $2.5 million by the fifth year after the agreement is in place.

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