Oconee rushes to prepare tax notices

Staff works overtime to meet Oct. 1 deadline

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — To use a basketball analogy, the Oconee County Auditor's Office is putting on a full-court press to crank out tax notices on time and avoid a repeat of last year's fiasco.


Nix

Auditor Ken Nix said Wednesday that his staff — along with personnel from the Assessor, Delinquent Tax and Treasurer's offices — are putting in overtime, including weekend work, to have tax notices available for the public by the Oct. 1 deadline set by the South Carolina Department of Revenue.

A year ago, Nix requested and received two deadline extensions to get the tax notices calculated because software conversion issues with the Assessor's Manatron system threw an unexpected monkey wrench in production.

The public relations nightmare caused by the delay was compounded when scores of residents complained that their tax bills were incorrect. The Assessor and Auditor's offices stayed busy

SEE NOTICES, PAGE A5

NOTICES: Nix might have to ask for extension

FROM PAGE A1

handling appeals.

Nix said his office did not become aware of the tax software issues until it was too late and had a mountain of work on its hands.

"We knew this was coming," Nix said of the latest round of tax software issues. "Last year, we didn't know this was an issue."

County Administrator Scott Moulder warned Oconee County Council last month that the Manatron system was outputting corrupt data.

Moulder updated council last week and said the issues with Manatron were in the process of being resolved. He said Manatron would be used for the countywide reassessment, but not for producing the tax notices.

Nix said Moulder asked him what he needed to get the tax notices prepared.

"He's been very supportive," Nix said of Moulder.

Nix said Moulder established a special Tax Center Fund to cover overtime and to buy some equipment. He said personnel from the four Tax Center departments is being juggled to work on preparing tax notices. Additionally, Nix said his office has hired three temporary employees.

"We probably have about 13 people working on this project," Nix said.

Some of these employees are coming in to work before their regular 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule and some are even putting in time on Saturdays and Sundays.

Despite the team effort, it's possible that Nix might have to ask the Department of Revenue for an extension. He said work calculating tax notices is less than 70 percent completed.

Nix said he would know by mid-September whether he'd have to ask for an extension.

In the meantime, a spokesperson for Manatron, Inc. said the company is working closely with Oconee so the county can successfully complete its reassessment.

Rachel Bryant, director of marketing for Manatron, said the company has provided additional on-site staff to Oconee to assist in addressing its issues and questions. She said Manatron's remote technicians also have been able to log into the county's system to assist IT personnel in working through problems and issues.

"The bottom line is that Manatron is completely focused on working with those Oconee County officials and staff that use Manatron software on a daily basis to make sure their questions are addressed," Bryant said.

carlo...@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685