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Oconee's Delinquent Tax Sale brings in $668,796

Amount collected is 46 percent less than the $1.2 million brought in last year

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WALHALLA — This week's Delinquent Tax Sale brought $668,796 in to Oconee County's coffers.

The number of properties sold in public auction Monday dropped from a year ago, as did the proceeds.

According to the Delinquent Tax Office, 328 properties were put on sale, but only 173 went to the highest bidder.

The almost $669,000 collected this year is 46 percent less than the $1.2 million collected at last year's Delinquent Tax Sale, when almost 400 properties were auctioned.

County officials had no explanation for the sharp drop in properties sold and money generated from this week's auction.

The 155 properties that did not sell will be forwarded to the county's Forfeited Land Commission on Nov. 20, Delinquent Tax Office Director Linda Shugart said. She said those parcels would be available for purchase at that time.

State law allows delinquent taxpayers one year to redeem their property following the Delinquent Tax Sale. To do so, the defaulting taxpayer must pay back taxes with interest and any applicable fee.

Last year, of the approximately 400 properties that made the delinquent tax sale list, only 35 were

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redeemed.

At Tuesday night's County Council meeting, Councilman Wayne McCall publicly acknowledged Councilman Joel Thrift's generous gesture of personally helping to pay the delinquent taxes of a property owner.

Shrugging off the accolade, Thrift said he would like the county to look into the possibility of starting a fund to help long-standing property owners that are in danger of losing their properties because they could not pay the taxes.

For his part, McCall has been donating his councilman's salary to help save properties from delinquent tax sales through an organization called REST — Relief Effort for Senior Taxes.

Rev. Tim Whited, the pastor at Salem United Methodist Church, said too often seniors on fixed incomes choose to buy food or prescription medicines and fall short when it's time to pay property taxes.

Whited is scheduled to speak before the Rotary Club on noon Monday at the Depot in Walhalla.

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