Pickens County reassessment cost $24,000 – a fraction of Oconee's price tag



Reassessment 2010:
The high price of pricing property

Editor's note: This is the third of a four-part series exploring the reappraisal of properties in Oconee County.

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — At a public meeting earlier this year, Pickens County Administrator Chap Hurst could not help but give County Assessor David Day a pat on the back for the efficient work his office had done in getting the countywide reassessment completed.

Hurst said reassessment is something every county in the state must deal with, but on this occasion, he took time out to praise the cost effective way the assessor's office had put it together. He said the job had been completed for approximately $24,000.

Hurst could not help but point out that a "neighboring county," which he did not name, is spending more than $1.8 million to do its reassessment.

It is no secret that Oconee County is the neighboring county that is spending 75 times more than Pickens for its reappraisal.

Hurst pointed out that Pickens County "always does a good job with funding."

There are 15 counties, including Oconee, that are doing their reassessment this year. Aside from Oconee, The Journal could not find any other jurisdiction that has outsourced the job that pertains to the Assessor's Office.

Oconee County Councilman Wayne McCall has been a vocal critic of the local Assessor's Office's

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inability to plan and execute a reassessment program that comes around every five years.

A frustrated McCall has called for money to be taken out of the Assessor's Office to pay for the private reassessment contract awarded to Tyler Technologies, Inc.

McCall even lobbied to have money taken out of the Assessor's Office to fund needed legal positions in the Solicitor's Office.

Each time, Interim County Administrator Gene Klugh recommended that any action to be taken with the Assessor's Office be put off until newly hired County Administrator Scott Moulder comes on board next week. Klugh said Moulder should be given the time to review the situation in the Assessor's Office.

Klugh said the county is reviewing the resumes of several good candidates for the county assessor's job that became vacant when Leslie Smith retired in March. He openings for a new assessor and chief deputy won't be filled until Moulder arrives.

Klugh recommended outsourcing reassessment from the Assessor's Office because of Smith's limited staff, the volume of work involved and the quick turnaround needed to complete the reappraisal.

Yet, other counties facing the same task are doing it without hiring outside help.

Abbeville Assessor Bobby Gladden said on Tuesday that his small staff is plowing away at reassessment.

Despite having just three full-time and three part-time employees to visit and reassess 16,500 parcels, Gladden said he must get the job done within his department's budget of $151,819. Although he's requested more staff and money, Gladden said it's unlikely he'll get more in a tough budget year.

To pull off the "monumental" reassessment on top of his office's regular duties, Gladden said Abbeville is in the process of approving a resolution to formally ask the Department of Revenue for a one year extension for implementing its reassessment program as allowed by state law.

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>
> **Debbie Adkins**
> Greenville County assessor

"We are stretched thin in this effort," Gladden said.

However, Gladden said the situation would be more dire had Moulder, who'll complete his stint as Abbeville County director this week before moving to Oconee, had not upgraded the department's technology. He said Moulder invested in a GIS system, laptop computers and a used, but upgraded mass appraisal software that has allowed his office to do more with less.

"It's helped us be more efficient," Gladden said.

Abbeville's neighbor, Greenwood County, is getting its reassessment done this year with a nine-person staff in the Assessor's Office.

Greenwood Assessor Vivian Lancaster said her office is reappraising 36,000 parcels, or a little more than half of the properties to be reassessed in Oconee. Lancaster said her office also would request an extension from DOR to implement its reassessment program.

Greenville County Assessor Debbie Adkins said her office is in the midst of reassessing some 212,000 parcels without outsourcing any of the work.

"It doesn't cost us anything else other than a little more salary because of overtime," Adkins said.

County assessors in other jurisdictions envy Oconee County for its decision to outsource its reassessment program to Tyler Technologies for $1.8 million. However, they understand it is a luxury their respective counties would not be able to afford at this time.

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