Reassessment appeals

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — A surge in the number of taxpayers appealing their property reassessment is quickly approach the magnitude of the 2006 debacle in Oconee County.

Comments made by county officials during Thursday night's town hall meeting at the Walhalla Civic Auditorium indicate that the problems with this year's reassessment likely will eclipse the messy countywide appraisal of properties five years ago.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said appeals spiked in recent weeks and are approaching 5,000. In 2006, some 5,000 appeals were filed, and it took more than three years to resolve them all.

The information showing the scope of the reassessment problem surfaced in response to a question anonymously submitted and read by town hall moderator Janet Smalley.

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>
> **Scott Moulder**
> Oconee County Administrator

near 5,000

"Why isn't council working to fix the reassessment problem instead of hoping it'll go away?"

"At this point, we realize there are issues," said Moulder, who admitted that much of his time — almost 75 percent of it — is spent dealing with appeals.

Moulder said the county has "processed thousands of adjustments" that represent a value of $5 million. He said the county projected in its current budget $12 million to cover reassessment appeals.

Unlike the 2006 reassessment that was undertaken by the Assessor's Office, council outsourced the job to Tyler Technologies Inc. for $1.8 million.

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APPEALS: 'It's not 100% wrong'

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"There are issues with some of the data presented by Tyler Technologies," Moulder said. "We have recognized there are errors in the data. It's not 100 percent wrong. Not everybody that sees me gets their property value corrected ... but we are finding an average percentage, if you will, of parcels that need corrections."

The rate of adjustments is about 65 percent, Moulder said.

Moulder said the appeals are subsiding somewhat, but he's still encouraging taxpayers to appeal if they want to challenge their assessment. The deadline for filing an appeal is Dec. 9.

The Assessor's Office is working overtime to help people with their appeals, Moulder said.

One thing the county is not considering is doing away with the reassessment, Moulder added.

"It would cost us hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, as well as months and months of time ... There's no way possible for us to wipe the numbers out and go back to last year."



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Chickasaw Pointe resident Gene Blair writes down a question to be read to the Oconee County Council at Thursday's town hall meeting at the Walhalla Civic Auditorium. Sitting is event moderator Janet Smalley, and in the background is newly elected Walhalla Councilman Tjay Bagwell, who helped organize the meeting.

Moulder said one of the options available to the county is to talk with Tyler about the quality of their work.

"I can't share in great detail more than that, but we're pursuing other opportunities as well," Moulder said.

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