

# Reassessment remains moving target

## Oconee weighs impact of lower tax assessment for Duke Energy

BY CARLOS GALARZA  
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WALHALLA — Oconee County officials said this week that they are reviewing how the decrease in the Duke Energy industrial tax assessment might affect the total reassessment numbers.

County Administrator Scott Moulder told The Journal that Oconee County Council could face tough decisions if the numbers don't justify a rollback millage.

"I would say there are options council would have to consider in the event there is no rollback and the current millage doesn't provide the necessary revenues to cover the budget expenses," Moulder said in an interview that touched on the county's finances.

Moulder said under the worst-case scenario the options would include cutting the budget, raising the millage or pulling from county reserves to cover budgeted expenses.

However, Moulder and Finance Director Kendra Brown are not ready to panic.

For starters, they pointed at \$340,000 set aside by council in a contingency in the event revenues don't come in equal to what is needed. Moulder said the \$340,000 is equal to more than half of the expected value of a mill.

Brown added that the county took a conservative approach by building the current fiscal 2012 budget on the estimated value of the mill for 2011 — \$490,000.



## TARGET: Council meeting Sept. 6

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"We used that same number for 2012, but we already know the 2011 mill was more than that," Brown said. "I don't anticipate us having a problem."

Asked whether the county could put off building a new \$18 million jail if revenues fall short of expectation, county officials discarded that option.

"We have already borrowed the money for the jail," Brown said. "They put it into our bank ac-

count ... We have to assess that millage no matter what we do."

Moulder said even if the decision is made not to build the jail, the money still has to be paid back.

"That decision has nothing to do with our General Fund operation," Moulder said.

Moulder said the eight positions added because of the new jail could be erased if the jail is not built, but he said the savings would be minimal compared to the big picture.

County Auditor Ken Nix announced Monday that Duke Energy's taxable assessment issued by the South Carolina Department of Revenue is \$143.3 million, or \$1.6 million less than the previous year.

Nix acknowledged Wednesday that he has received countywide reassessment data. He said his goal is to present a millage rate recommendation at the Sept. 6 county council meeting.

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