Some Pickens homeowners

3-mill cut likely to help those whose property values went down or held

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PICKENS — Some property owners in Pickens County could get an early Christmas present from the county when they receive their tax notices next month.

The 2010 tax year is a reassessment year in Pickens County, and County Council has voted to establish a millage rate of 53.2 for county operations for fiscal year 2010-11, which rolls back the rate by nearly three mills from the previous year.

What that will mean for homeowners' taxes depends on individual home values, said Ralph Guarino, finance director for the county.

Guarino said if the assessed value of a home decreased or stayed the same since last year, then homeowners will likely see a decrease in their taxes because of the millage rate decrease.

"If the value of your house went up, then the reduction in the millage may offset that and you may end up paying the same amount of taxes that you did the year before," he said.

County Administrator Chappell Hurst said the last time there was a reassessment in Pickens County was in 2003. At that time, the country was coming out of a recession, and home values were down.

"We never captured that housing bubble that occurred in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007," Hurst said. "By not reassessing during that period of time, they never paid on those high values."

The county was scheduled to complete property reassessment in 2008, but the council voted to delay that in part because the economy at the time was in the middle of what is generally considered the deepest recession since the Great Depression.

State law allows counties to postpone reassessment

to pay less tax

under certain conditions.

Guarino said the value of a mill went up because this year's property assessment rose overall. He said that as a result, the county had to reduce the millage for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

"We can't take in any more revenue this year with the taxes than we did the previous year," Hurst said. "That's why millage had to be lowered."

Guarino said the millage rate for county operations for 2009-10 was 56 mills and that the approved millage rate for 2010-11 is 53.2 mills, a reduction of 2.8 mills.

He said millage for Tri-County Tech has been rolled back .2 mills and the library system .4 mills, for a total of 3.4 mills.

Guarino said if the assessed value of someone's $100,000 home stayed the same as last year their taxes would drop by about $13.60.

Residents in three county fire districts — Keowee Vineyards, Keowee Springs and Shady Grove — will also see millage rates for the fire districts roll back, he said.