

Oconee to see nearly 6-mill tax increase

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WALHALLA — With no discussion Tuesday night, Oconee County Council agreed to raise property taxes by 5.9 mills, as recommended by the assessor, to bridge anticipated budget gaps.

County assessor Christy Hubbard said the increase was due in part to a decrease in utility values and increases in budgets. County council previously voted for an increase for designated

millage of 3.3 mills for economic development and capital vehicle replacement. Council also anticipated an additional 0.6 mills to fund other operational increases, though the exact number couldn't be set until the mill value was established.

The difference of 0.8 mills is largely due to Duke Energy's 2019 assessment, which dropped by \$10 million, Hubbard said. The utility company is currently in an appeals

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process with the South Carolina Department of Revenue to petition for its own tax cut.

"Basically, Duke thinks that they should be considered a manufacturing property," Hubbard said, adding manufacturers pay fewer property taxes. "The Department of Revenue has recertified numbers to us because of the appeal. As of right now, it's in litigation, so we will see."

Those recertified numbers saw a difference in the budget of more than \$800,000, Hubbard said, which could be given back to the county if Duke Energy loses its appeal. Until that matter is settled, the county plans to operate with the new numbers and a mill value of \$545,613.

The 5.9-mill increase means homeowners who primarily live in Oconee County will see an increase of \$18.80 per \$100,000 of home value. Vehicles registered in the county valued at \$25,000 should see a tax increase of about \$8.85.

"I think the citizens are more concerned with the millions of dollars their government is spending and how that spending is done," county administrator Amanda Brock said. "This year, we have a solid spending and improvement plan so they can see where their dollars are going."

"The impact per household is less than \$20 per \$100,000 of house value,

so that proverbial drop in the bucket millage



Brock

matters less to them than the millions we spend of their money."

There was no change in bond millage for the 2019 tax year, as Oconee County remained at 8 mills and the school district stayed at 31. The Keowee Fire District also stayed steady at 14.5 mills, and the municipalities were also unchanged.

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