

# Duke assessment up nearly \$30M

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON  
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Thanks to upgrades at Oconee Nuclear Station, Duke Energy's assessment in the county jumped nearly \$30 million from 2019 to 2020, resulting in nearly

\$3 million additional tax dollars for the county.

The assessment came in at \$167,893,720, according to Oconee County Auditor Christy Hubbard.

"It's a little over \$2 million extra for the schools and a little over \$850,000 additional for

the county," she said. "I do suspect that I will get an appeal in, but it will be probably around 2 to 2.5 percent, which is the reduction because they think they are a manufacturer versus a utility."

The original 2019 assessment came in around

\$149 million, but dropped to \$137.9 million when Duke Energy began the appeal process to be classified as a manufacturer rather than a utility.

"At this point in time, I've been told by the

SEE DUKE, PAGE A3

A low-pressure turbine sits inside Oconee Nuclear Station in January ahead of its installation. Duke Energy's tax assessment jumped nearly \$30 million this year, due in part, according to Oconee County Councilman John Elliott, to the replacement of turbines.

SAVANNAH BLAKE | THE JOURNAL



## DUKE: Value of a mill rose \$15K this year

FROM PAGE A1

South Carolina Department of Revenue that this could go on for years, because they think Duke will take it to the highest level of appeals," Hubbard said.

Manufacturers are assessed at 14.29 percent, while power companies are assessed at 10.5 percent, according to the state Department of Revenue's website. The manufacturing exemption comes in at \$27,207,930, Hubbard said, and she's already counting on Duke Energy winning the appeal so the county won't have to repay any taxes to the company.

"When I set millage, I always

work in a percentage for uncollectables and for utilities. This year, I used 3 percent," she said. "I have already anticipated the appeal in the numbers I used to set millage."

Using the lower tax assessment rate for the county's largest taxpayer, the value of a mill in Oconee County rose more than \$15,000 this year.

Oconee County Councilman John Elliott told The Journal the increased assessment was due, in part, to the replacement of turbines at Oconee Nuclear Station.

The site is in the middle of replacing the three low-pressure turbines in all three of its units, according to spokeswoman Mikayla Kreuzberger. Unit 1 will have its low-pressure

turbines replaced during a planned fall refueling outage, Kreuzberger said, and Unit 2 and Unit 3 had low-pressure turbine replacements in fall 2019 and spring 2020, respectively.

Each Oconee unit has three low-pressure turbines that are steam-driven and drive the unit's electric generator, she said.

"Just as homeowners maintain their investment in their homes through regular maintenance and home improvements, we continuously perform preventive maintenance and implement new technology and other improvements at all our nuclear plants," Kreuzberger said.