

# **OCONEE COUNTY**

## **THE YEAR IN REVIEW**



**Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/11**

**THE YEAR IN PHOTOS**



# OCONEE COUNTY MISSION STATEMENT

Provide the highest quality services in a fiscally responsible manner to promote the health, safety and general welfare of all Oconee County citizens.

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Dear Fellow Oconee County Citizens,

The Board of Commissioners is pleased to provide this report on our county department activities for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2011. Even though the Year In Review is by no means all-inclusive, we have included highlights of several accomplishments during the past fiscal year.

This has been another year where we have consciously worked to tighten our belts in response to the economic challenges facing our community. Throughout your county government, we have reduced budgets and personnel over the past few years. Our general fund budget has decreased from \$25.2 million to \$19.5 million in just the last three years. Due to a tax digest that shrunk approximately 7 percent this year due to declining property values, we have taken in approximately 11-12 percent less tax revenue than the prior year. That decrease is on top of additional declines over the past few years. Additionally, the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education held the millage rates at the same level that they have been for the past few years.

Much of our community's success through these challenging times is due to the dedicated county employees who take their jobs seriously. In total, we finished the fiscal year with 226 full-time and 36 part-time employees. We are very fortunate to continually hear from you that our county employees strive to go above and beyond what is written in their job descriptions to serve this community.

Oconee County is in the process of revising our county website ([www.oconeecounty.com](http://www.oconeecounty.com)) so that we can better serve the community. This revision, which will be completed before the end of the calendar year, will result in a much more robust site that allows the user to search documents and be presented in a more user-friendly manner.

One major road project of note that I am sure you have noticed is the Jennings Mill Parkway Extension. This project is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2011. This road will allow for travel along one road from downtown Watkinsville to the Lowe's on Epps Bridge Parkway. This project, being funded by Georgia DOT, will fly over Loop 10 and open up several hundred acres for commercial development before reaching the rear portion of the Lowe's and McDonalds properties.

I trust that this Year in Review will provide you with facts and information that help you know more about your community. You are invited to visit our website for more information or you can call the Courthouse at 706-769-5120.

Thank you for all that you do to make Oconee County a great place to live, work and play!

For the Board of Commissioners,

Melvin Davis, Chairman

Jim Luke, Commissioner – Post 1

Margaret Hale, Commissioner Post 3

John Daniell, Commissioner – Post 2

Chuck Horton, Commissioner – Post 4

## **THE FUTURE**

### **UTILITIES**

The Oconee County Utility Department (OCUD) is in the process of developing a Water & Wastewater Strategy to outline future water and sewer projects in Oconee County. This strategy will enable OCUD to prepare for future system maintenance, as well as expansion of the system to support community water and wastewater needs, yet be flexible enough to address changing local conditions.

### **T-SPLOST**

The Georgia General Assembly has developed a regional transportation funding mechanism that is scheduled to go before the voters in July 2012. Known as the T-SPLOST, regions must develop a list of projects to be funded with 75 percent of the tax receipts that must be approved by the voters of the region. The remaining 25 percent will be divided among the region based upon population and road mileage. The region consists of Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe and Walton counties.

This additional 25 percent is projected to result in approximately \$1 million dollars per year for Oconee County to use for transportation projects over and above the \$1.2 million currently allocated through Oconee County's SPLOST. High priority projects for Oconee County include the Mars Hill Road widening project, the Oconee Connector/316 Interchange project and improvements that would be made to several roads throughout the county.

### **MARS HILL ROAD WIDENING**

The design for the widening of Mars Hill Road is complete and has been approved by Georgia DOT. Presently, right-of-way acquisition is underway and is expected to be completed by spring of 2012. The estimated cost of the right-of-way acquisition is \$8.5 million. Construction of Phase I is expected to cost \$23 million and is expected to be completed approximately 2 years after its initiation. The first phase of this project will span from SR 316 to Butler's Crossing. Georgia DOT will be funding the right-of-way acquisition and construction costs, while Oconee County will be responsible for a portion of the design and utility relocations.

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS UPDATES**

In the 2009 SPLOST referendum, voters approved a portion of the SPLOST proceeds to make telecommunications upgrades. These upgrades will include towers for an 800 MHz system that will support multiple departments within the county and allow for coordinated communication with different agencies throughout the region, including E-911, Sheriff's Office, Fire, and Road Departments. A plan has been approved to construct one tower in southern Oconee County.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT LOCATIONS**

With an eye to the future, Oconee County is evaluating where future fire stations should be located. The fire department will be in the process of reviewing strategic locations for future fire stations in several parts of the county. Property has been secured in Eastville for a future fire station, as well as in Farmington. Site planning for the Farmington station is currently underway. Additionally, the Board of Commissioners is evaluating potential locations for a future fire stations in the Barnett Shoals area.

## THE ECONOMY

While the economy could definitely be better, all is not gloom and doom in Oconee County.

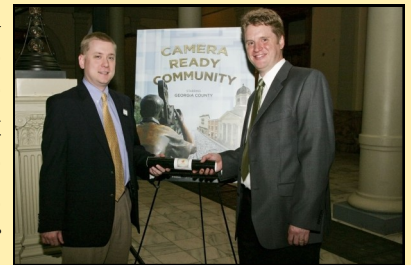
As evidenced by the Oconee County Code Enforcement office, there were 163 new business licenses issued within unincorporated Oconee County. Add to that all business licenses issued by the municipalities in the county and there were over 180 new businesses started in Oconee County during the past year. There is an age-old rule that “the best time to start a business is at the end of a recession” and it appears that this is holding true in Oconee County.

Speaking of these new businesses that have opened in Oconee County, we have seen a diverse mixture of new businesses ranging from retail to restaurants, fitness facilities to medical offices and home-based businesses. There have been more businesses talking with our Economic Development Department in the past few months than anytime in recent years. These businesses have ranged from health care to information technology and manufacturing to restaurants.

New businesses will help diversify our local economy and reduce the tax burden for county residents. Currently, zoning for business activities within the county make up approximately 1.5 percent of total acreage in the county, but provide almost 12 percent of the total property tax revenue taken in by the community.

Oconee County has consistently had the lowest unemployment rate in the state over the past year. This is due primarily to the stability provided to the local economy through UGA, health care, and the local schools (both public and private). These employers provide stability amidst the economic turmoil that has gripped the nation over the past few years. While unemployment is still the lowest in the state, that is no reason to be complacent as we need to ensure that we work diligently to assist businesses as they seek to open their doors in Oconee County so they can provide all-important jobs for us, our friends, and our neighbors.

During the past year, Oconee County was designated as Camera Ready by the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s Film, Music and Digital Entertainment division. This process required that Oconee County develop an inventory of locations that are suitable for inclusion in movies, television shows, or music videos and submit those for inclusion in a database of properties around the state. Oconee County is still accepting properties for inclusion in the database. Those interested in having a property listed should contact Rusty Haygood in the Oconee County Economic Development Office.



One more bright note is that the Oconee County Economic Development Department and the Oconee County Chamber of Commerce have continued working to promote businesses in the community through the “go LOCAL” initiative. This initiative was developed to educate members of the local community of the impacts of their spending decisions. When goods and services are purchased elsewhere— rather than locally—not only do tax dollars go to support the governmental functions of some other community, but the community loses out on the opportunity for the money to “roll-over” and create further economic impact. Once the money leaves the community, it doesn’t come back.





# OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE



## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE 2010-2011

Oconee County Fire Rescue provides Medical First Responder services to the citizens of the county with five (5) rescue trucks and one (1) mass casualty truck. These services are provided by 73 volunteer medically trained fire rescue personnel with an average response time of 6.5 minutes. There has been a 143% increase in medically trained personnel since 2009. National EMS Inc. provides Advanced Life Support transport services in Oconee County through a contract with Athens Regional Medical Center and St. Mary's Healthcare System. In October 2011, Oconee County Fire Rescue will begin the second Medical First Responder class of the year and train additional volunteers to respond to medical emergencies in the community.

### 73 Oconee County Fire Rescue Personnel – Medically Trained

34 First Responders – over 80 hours training

47 EMTs – over 400 hours training

5 Paramedics – over 1000 hours training



### Total Emergency Medical Responses

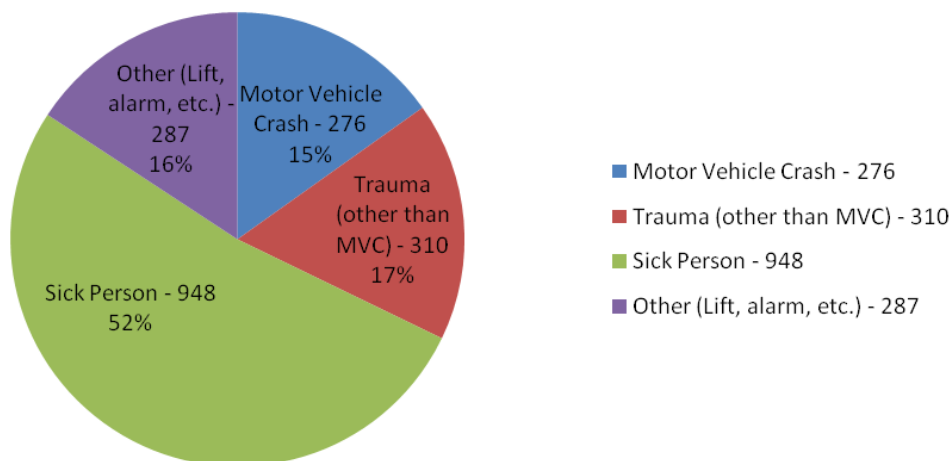
2007 – 1759

2008 – 1804

2009 – 1852



### Total Emergency Medical Responses July 1, 2010 to June 31, 2011







# OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY 2010-2011



Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is the local community-based equivalent of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency at the state level and the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the federal level. Oconee County EMA works closely with these agencies (as well as dozens of others, both public and private) before, during, and after emergencies and disasters.

The Oconee County Emergency Management Agency is responsible for assisting in the protection of lives and property of Oconee County citizens in the event of natural or manmade disasters. Emergency Management anticipates emergencies, takes steps to prevent loss of life and property, and provides quick response when havoc strikes.

Oconee County's Emergency Management Agency was established by the Board of Commissioners to develop and implement a county-wide program. The backbone of the countywide program is all emergency agencies and support agencies work together. Emergency management and other emergency agencies identify hazards that face each community and develop contingency plans for each potential emergency. Emergency management provides the expertise, training, and coordination that local governments need to protect lives and property.



### Mutual Aid Responses:

Oconee County Fire Rescue responded to mutual aid requests from Rabun County EMA after one of the communities was destroyed by tornadoes. Oconee County Fire Rescue sent personnel two days to assist with search and rescue operations.







# OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

## FIRE DEPARTMENT 2010-2011



Oconee Fire Rescue is responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing the fire prevention and suppression activities of seven volunteer fire stations in Oconee County and providing First Responder medical and emergency response support.. These seven fire stations are staffed with 163 volunteer firefighters who have an average response time of 6.5 minutes. In addition, 73 volunteers are Medical First Responders who provide EMS support services to Oconee County.

The Fire Department is also responsible for: responding to all structure fires in Oconee County and other applicable calls; keeping updated records for ISO (Insurance Services Organization) and working to achieve the best ISO rating; coordinating joint training for all stations; providing fire safety classes for schools and daycare centers; working with local and state agencies on arson investigations; recruiting new volunteer firefighters and coordinating volunteer firefighter training.

### **163 Oconee County Fire Rescue Personnel**

35 Fire Rescue Personnel Basic 101 Certified

106 Fire Rescue Personnel NPQ Certified

39 State First Responder Certified

42 EMT-Intermediate Certified

6 EMT-Paramedic Certified

138 Hazardous Material Certified

130 Vehicle Extrication Certified

34 Rescue Specialists Certified

8 Currently in Fire Training Program

### **Total Fire Responses**

2003 - 684

2007 - 903

2004 - 795

2008 - 801

2005 - 750

2009 - 747

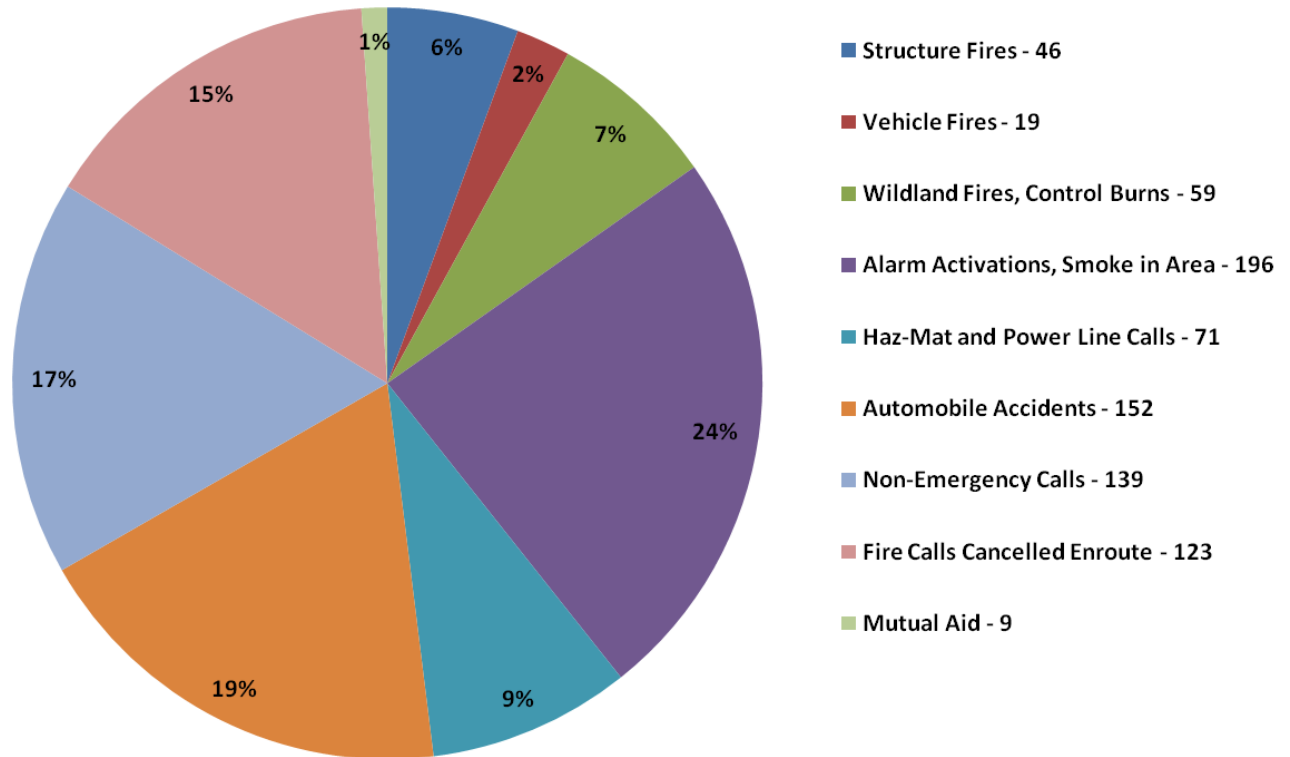
2006 - 787

2010 - 814



# OCONEE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

**Total Fire Rescue Responses July 2010 - June 2011**



# PARKS & RECREATION

**Oconee County is a great place to live, work & PLAY!**

## **Programs**

- Fall Programs such as Tackle Football, Flag Football, Soccer and Cheerleading had 1,307 participants enrolled.
- The winter season had over 600 young people and adults participate in Basketball programs.
- Spring soccer had over 850 participants enrolled with 96 teams.
- This spring we had 115 participants enrolled in various programs such as homeschool P.E., Volleyball, Smart Start Baseball and Yoga.
- Over 400 adults participated in the spring season of Adult softball with 27 teams.
- Over 250 youth participating in Middle School Madness which was offered twice during the school year from 7:00 to 10:30 p.m. at the Community Center with a variety of activities offered.
- The afterschool program for 2010-2011 had an average of 130 participants. Teen Extreme had 15 participants enrolled.
- Summer Day Camp was at capacity with 170 participants.
- OCPRD offered 24 Summer Sports Camps with over 680 participants enrolled.



## **Volunteers**

- Estimates are that over 19,240 volunteer hours were donated by coaches during FY11. The recorded value per hour of a volunteer is \$18.77, which totals over \$361,000 the county has saved by having great volunteers.
- 240 volunteer coaches donated 9,600 volunteer hours of service to fall youth programs.
- 81 volunteer coaches donating 3,240 hours of service during winter season.
- Over 160 volunteer coaches in the spring donating 6,400 hours of service to the youth programs offered.

## **Departmental Awards**

- 2010 District 7 Agency of the Year
- 2010 District 7 Volunteer of the Year—Paul Dallas
- 2010 District 7 Programmer of the Year—Jared Hightower
- 2010 State Publication Award for OCPRD Quarterly Program Brochure
- 2010 State Athletic Programmer of the Year—Drew Torok
- 2010 State Student & Young Professional of the Year—Mark Perkins
- 2010 Excellence in Youth Sports Award from National Alliance of Youth Sports
- 2010 Georgia County of Excellence Award





## PARKS & RECREATION

OCPRD focuses on Excellence in Youth Sports. The department was spotlighted in Georgia Trend magazine as a Georgia County of Excellence during the last fiscal year. FY11 has been the most active year of OCPRD since its inception.

The department has seen over 175 field and facility rentals, over 4,500 program participants, over 8,300 special program and community event participants, over 59,000 annual day trips to the fitness center, and an open gym and indoor walking track with over 1,400 active fitness memberships. These figures do not take into account daily passive use of the parks for horseback riding, walking, running, picnics, playground use, or for spectators for various events.

The department also hosted the circus, mountain bike and cross country races, the Stihl Chainsaw Lumberjack competition, as well as multiple softball tournaments.

OCPRD, the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association District Agency of the year, has an estimated \$500,000 annual economic impact on the community. The park system and programs create an environment for meaningful leisure activities for citizens which contributes to Oconee County recently being ranked as one of the healthiest communities in the state. The benefits of recreation are endless and what makes Oconee County: A great place to live, work and play!

<b>FY11 OCPRD PARTICIPATION RATES BY ACTIVITY</b>	
<b>Summer 2010</b>	
Yoga	17
Summer Sports Camps	559
Smart Start	23
Summer Day Camp/Teen Extreme	170/week
<b>Fall 2010</b>	
Homeschool P.E.	31
Start Smart Soccer	13
Volleyball	32
Soccer	774
Tackle Football	267
Cheerleading	52
Flag Football	106
Adult Flag Football	108
Yoga	21
<b>Winter 2010</b>	
Homeschool P.E.	31
Mighty Mite Rockers Basketball	55
Basketball	358
Start Smart Basketball	19
Adult Basketball	120
Intramural Teen Basketball	96
Yoga	52
<b>Spring 2011</b>	
Sticks for Kids	19
Start Smart Baseball	22
Start Smart Soccer	20
Volleyball	24
Yoga	22
Soccer	860
Adult Softball	432

## SENIOR CENTER

The Oconee Co. Senior Center serves Oconee seniors who are 60 and over. It is our mission to promote physical and economic well being of older adults and to promote their participation in all aspects of community life assuring that their quality of life is enhanced. There have been over 250 seniors receiving services in the past year.

The Senior Center is located at Oconee Veterans Park. The new center opened in 2008. Services have been expanded, and seniors enjoy a new state of the art attractive building. The spacious dining area can seat 200 easily. The commercial kitchen enables staff to prepare food in addition to the nutritious catered meal. On average, 50 congregate meals are served daily and 25 home delivered meals are sent out. A large parquet dance floor provides the setting for dancing, exercise, and yoga. The game room attracts men and women of all ages with pool, darts, and shuffleboard. The large multipurpose room allows craft classes, card games, tile games, quilting, and puzzles. An attractive foyer allows plenty of space for displaying and selling senior handicrafts and items donated to the Center for fundraising efforts.



Activity highlights for the past year have been Star Spangled Celebration, Family Fun Day, Motor Coach trip to New York City, Hawaiian Luau, Halloween Costume Party, October Fest, Christmas Party, New Year Party, Valentine Party with King and Queen Coronation, Valentine Gala, Old Fashioned Carnival, Mardi Gras Celebration, Easter Hat Party, Country Music Explosion Part and Dance, and Older American Month Party.

The new patio opened this past year which allowed for new outside activities. The grand opening was hampered by rain, but staff, volunteers, Advisory Council Members, friends, and public officials came together to officially open the patio in a grand manner.

Senior classes are popular with active senior consumers. Among many classes offered are computer, drawing, acrylic painting, exercise, line dance, ballroom dance, Tai Chi, flower arranging, and AARP Driver safety.

New partnerships with the Senior Center are Ingles, Trader Jo's, Publix, Wal-Mart, Hospice Agencies, and Home Health Agencies, With the assistance of these companies, we are able to enhance senior services.



## OCONEE COUNTY LIBRARIES

There are two Libraries in Oconee County: the Oconee County Library and Bogart Public Library. The libraries in Oconee County are funded by four local agencies: the Oconee County School District, the Oconee County Board of Commissioners, the City of Watkinsville, and the City of Bogart.

During the past year, one of the most notable services that became available to patrons of the libraries was the offering of E-books. Patrons could “check-out” E-books for a given period of time. The E-books are compatible with multiple platforms that are readily available on the open market. E-books were not available for the entire year, but still made over 500 loans of books through this program.

The Oconee County Library Friends Third Annual Used Book Sale occurred during FY11. This raised the funds to donate \$15,000 to the Oconee County Library. These funds sponsored programs during the Summer Reading Program, new books, DVDs, books on CD, and Young Adult programs throughout the year at the libraries. Friends of the Bogart Library Bookstore proceeds sponsored similar enhancements at the Bogart Library.

In FY 2011, there were 1,860 children participating in the summer reading program, along with many adults. Additionally, there were 536 programs offered through the two libraries which were attended by 15,905 visitors.

Hours of operation at the Watkinsville branch have been altered for FY12. The library will close at 6:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Bogart Branch will not be open on Saturdays during FY12.

### **BY THE NUMBERS...**

**Checkouts:** 259,454 Total at both libraries (a 3.7% increase over FY10)

**# New Library Cards Issued:** 1,132

**# Computer Session Used:** 66,200

**Reference Questions Answered:** 54,612

**Number of Visits (Door Count):** 293,946

### **Watkinsville Branch Hours:**

Sunday 2:00pm-6:00pm; Monday/Wednesday:  
10:00am-9:00pm; Tuesday/Thursday/Friday/  
Saturday: 10:00am-6:00pm.

### **Bogart Branch Hours:**

Monday/Wednesday/Friday: 10:00am-6:00pm;  
Tuesday/Thursday: 12:00pm-8:00pm.





## PROPERTY APPRAISAL

In 2010, the number of housing sales decreased significantly in Oconee County, the fourth consecutive year with significantly fewer fair-market home purchases. Similar to trends seen throughout the nation, Oconee County's overall housing sale values fell compared to sales from previous years. There were almost fourteen percent more existing houses sold in Oconee County during 2009 than 2010. Additionally, the average sales price decreased as well.

The property appraisal office has a difficult charge; it must determine the fair market value of all property within the county. Under state law, the tax digest must mirror the sales data very closely. To that end, the Georgia Department of Revenue does an audit of all counties in the state to determine if their assessments are consistent with sales. Oconee County's latest sales ratio was 39.31%. The state requires that counties target a 40% ratio, with a +/- 2% margin of error allowed.

Historical Trends for Improved Residential Sales					Weighted Averages	
New Construction			Existing Construction		New & Existing Construction	
Year	# of Sales	Average \$/ Sale	# of Sales	Average \$/ Sale	# of Sales	Average \$/ Sale
2001	129	\$293,259.00	352	\$189,130.00	481	\$217,056.49
2002	203	\$260,779.00	346	\$209,146.00	549	\$228,237.98
2003	263	\$274,926.00	361	\$208,915.00	624	\$236,736.94
2004	203	\$330,198.00	330	\$229,337.00	533	\$258,068.00
2005	263	\$315,062.00	427	\$255,861.00	690	\$278,426.00
2006	243	\$355,517.00	458	\$266,158.00	701	\$297,134.00
2007	199	\$382,152.00	350	\$255,770.00	549	\$301,581.00
2008	137	\$370,452.00	207	\$269,004.00	344	\$309,406.00
2009	36	\$361,717.00	239	\$265,079.00	275	\$277,729.00
2010	31	\$329,122.00	207	\$258,356.00	238	\$267,574.00
These values were compiled from <b>Fair Market Value</b> sales only. <b>2010 sales are through 12/31/2010.</b> Questionable Fair Market Value sales were not included. New sales include 2009 and 2010 year built. Custom built homes not sold on the open market are <b>not</b> included.						

In FY11, there were 323 appeals filed where property owners contested the assessment of their property's fair market value.

## TAX COMMISSIONER

The goal of the Tax Commissioner's office is to serve the public to the best of its ability using the rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of Motor Vehicle Division and the Georgia Department of Revenue Property Tax Unit and to strengthen the quality of local government through professional management.

The Tax Commissioner's office serves as an agent of the Motor Vehicle Division and State Revenue Commissioner for the registration of motor vehicles, and performing all functions relating to billing, collecting, disbursing and accounting for all ad valorem taxes collected in Oconee County. The office issues and collects taxes for Oconee County based on the annual millage rate set by municipal, county and school governments.

In FY11, the office maintained a 99 percent collection rate of property taxes at the end of the fiscal year. It also maintained tag and title processing time to a minimum of two days.

In FY12, the office has strategic goals to serve the public to the best of our ability and strengthen the quality of local government, as well as to maintain a 99% collection rate of property taxes.

<b>TAX COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE DATA</b>	
<b>Tag Registrations Issued</b>	43,244
<b>Ad Valorem</b> collected for Vehicles & Mobile Homes for County purposes	\$733,894
<b>Ad Valorem</b> collected for Vehicles & Mobile Homes for School purposes	\$1,788,699
<b>Tax Parcels</b> for tax year 2010	17,122
<b>Property Tax</b> collected for County purposes - Current Year	\$9,551,977
<b>Property Tax</b> collected for County purposes - Prior Years (Prior years tax consists of tax collected in 2010 for 2009 and prior years.)	\$298,580
<b>Property Tax</b> collected for School purposes - Current Year	\$23,283,521
<b>Property Tax</b> collected for School Purposes - Prior Years (Prior years tax consists of tax collected in 2010 for 2009 and prior years.)	\$729,922
Change in <b>Tax Digest</b> (% Growth year-to-year)	-7.18%

## UTILITIES

During FY 11, the Oconee County Utility Department (OCUD) made several system upgrades to enhance the functionality of the water and wastewater systems. During September 2010, OCUD completed the **Hillcrest Well upgrade**. This project consisted of installing a water filtration and aeration system unit designed to treat drinking water.

In March 2011, an **Odor Control Upgrade to the Mars Hill Lift Station** was completed. This project allowed for the removal of hydrogen sulfide and other odor producing fumes.

At the close of FY11, two other projects were in progress. The **Lampkin Branch Sanitary Sewer Line Replacement**, begun in January 2011, will result in the replacement of 6,800 linear feet of 24" diameter sewer lines. This project is to replace aging infrastructure on one of the sewer system's main collection lines. Additionally the **Calls Creek WPCF Pump Station and Headworks Replacement project** is also in progress. When completed, the new headworks will consist of an auger screen, a grit collection and removal system, a submersible pump station with an emergency bypass pumping unit, and new control and monitoring systems.

During FY11, the total **demand for water** in Oconee County (July 2010-June 2011) was 890 million gallons. Of the total demand, 827 million gallons (93%) were purchased from Bear Creek Reservoir, 60 million gallons (6%) were produced by Oconee County wells, and 3 million gallons (<1%) was purchased from Barrow County. Of the total water demand, 115 million gallons was purchased from Oconee County by Walton County under an agreement approved by the Board of Commissioners during FY11.

The average daily demand for water during FY11 was 2.56 million gallons per day compared to the 1.98 million gallons per day used during FY10.

During FY11, **Oconee County received 52.40 inches of rain**. This is very close to the average annual rainfall rate for the county. However, this figure was far short of the 68.20 inches that the county received during FY10. The difference can basically be attributed to the months of September and October of 2011 when Oconee County received 8.3 inches of rain, compared to the 24.1 inches received during the same two months of 2010.

Oconee County's water **and wastewater systems each had small increases in the number of customers** for each service over the previous year. Both the water and wastewater system had an approximate 1 per-

	As of June 30, 2010	As of June 30, 2011
Water Customers	8,618	8,690
Sewer Customers	1,436	1,455

cent increase in the number of customers from the same period the year before.

Over **160 million gallons of wastewater was treated** during FY11 by OCUD. There were 89.425 million gallons treated at the Call's Creek WRF, while 73.365 million gallons were treated at the Rocky Branch LAS facility—almost 450,000 gallons of wastewater treated daily by OCUD. During FY11, Oconee County's wastewater treatment facilities received visitors from around the United States and also held tours and classes for local colleges and high schools.



# PUBLIC WORKS

## MAJOR TRANSPORTATION UPGRADES AND IMPROVEMENTS

During FY 2011, the public works department oversaw several major transportation upgrades and improvements. Of note, **Oconee Connector Extension** continues to move toward completion. The construction cost of this project, with the vast majority of the funds coming from Georgia DOT, is estimated to be roughly \$14 million. The project is approximately 70 percent complete and is scheduled for completion by December 2011.



The Public Works department also completed the **Butler's Crossing sidewalk project**. Construction was completed on the project and the sidewalks were opened to the public in October 2010.

The **Mars Hill Road widening project** is currently in the right-of-way acquisition phase. Right-of-way acquisition began in February 2011 and is expected to continue through May 2012. This phase is estimated to cost roughly \$9 million to be funded through Georgia DOT. Following the right-of-way acquisition, construction on the project is estimated to take two years after that phase is initiated. The construction phase will cost an estimated \$23 million, most of which will be funded through Georgia DOT.

Through state (LARP) and local (SPLOST) funds, the Public Works department **repaired and resurfaced 17 roads** within Oconee County. These roads included: Garrett Road, Mars Hill Road, McRees Mill Lane, Mill Chase Court, Old Mill Drive, Whippoorwill Road, Rocky Branch Road, Government Station Road, Bouldercrest Circle, Great Oaks Lane, Fernwood Drive, Wood Hollow Lane, Phimarga Lane, Hollyberry Lane, Harden Hill Road, Aycock Road, and Old Epps Bridge Road.



**Maintenance minimization** was done to Oakwood Drive. This dirt road was improved with a surface treatment. A photograph of the work in progress is shown to the left. **Minor bridge repairs** were made to the Clotfelter Road Bridge deck and rail. The road department responded to 182 citizen inquiries for assistance and completed 778 work orders.

Sanitation also falls under the purview of the Public Works Department. At the county's five **sanitation collection sites** (excluding the landfill location), there were 54,865 customers during the course of FY11. There were 35,412 collection site customers disposing of household waste, while 48,837 customers disposed of recyclable materials.

# TOURISM

## **Welcome Center Location:**

We have moved! This year, Oconee County's Welcome Center made a much needed move to a new location at 23 N. Main Street in downtown Watkinsville. This new location has resulted in much greater visitor counts, as well as has eliminated the negative comments about it being a difficult location to find. Tourism staff and volunteers continue to give tours of the Eagle Tavern, serve as step-on guides for tour groups, and actively solicit tour groups to visit Oconee County.



## **Top Art Community:**

This year, our Tourism Staff worked to get Watkinsville listed as one of *American Style* magazine's Top 25 Small Cities for Art. The magazine had categories of small, medium and large sized communities. Through online voting, Watkinsville unseated previously listed arts communities to make the list. Watkinsville joined elite company in that only three other Georgia cities—Atlanta, Savannah and Athens—made the list in their respective categories.

## **State Designated Visitor's Center:**

Through the efforts of our staff and volunteers, the Oconee County's Welcome Center officially became recognized by the State of Georgia as an officially designated State Visitor Center. Our staff and volunteers have made their new home on Main Street an informative and hospitable location for visitors and Oconee County residents to find information on various topics within the county and the region.

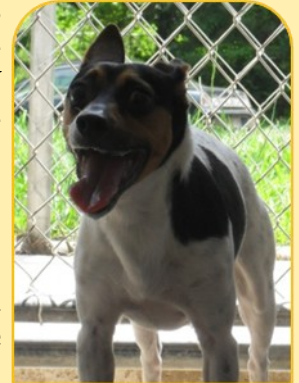
## **Ghosts:**

Paranormal groups have been coming to Oconee County in large numbers during FY11. They have expressed great interest in the Eagle Tavern and are beginning to ask about the Old Jail located behind the Courthouse. These groups come into the community and "investigate" during the nighttime hours and typically post their findings to that group's website. There have been ghosts identified by the ghost hunters. Are you interested in finding these haunted locations?



## ANIMAL CONTROL

Oconee County's Animal Control Department oversees a shelter that takes in almost 1,200 animals per year. The facility is dependent upon numerous volunteers to ensure the care of the animals housed there. During FY 2011, volunteers donated their time, efforts and energies at the shelter almost 700 times! These volunteers help ensure that the staff are able to operate the shelter at extremely high levels of service and provide the animals with love and support.



The mission of the Animal Control Department is to assist, protect and educate the public on animal care, animal welfare issues, and to enforce the county's animal control ordinance. Activity within the Animal Control Department during the fiscal year is shown below.

Mo.	Visits	# of Calls	# of Complaints	# Volunteers	# Adopted	Trans. to Licensed Agencies	# of Returns to owner	# of Intakes
July	156	5,823	88	36	19	11	20	135
Aug	112	5,978	105	46	15	18	13	101
Sept	75	6,230	129	33	11	30	8	127
Oct	94	6,325	142	64	13	16	13	104
Nov	160	6,158	135	59	9	14	19	59
Dec	125	5,987	127	8	5	17	22	91
Jan	105	6,203	113	30	11	22	10	68
Feb	121	6,235	147	121	4	34	26	103
Mar	126	6,302	152	107	10	31	18	103
Apr	129	6,387	161	113	7	31	11	79
May	109	6,281	78	12	12	27	8	86
Jun	116	5,873	154	45	6	31	16	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>1428</b>	<b>73,782</b>	<b>1531</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>1,148</b>





## COMMUNITY PLANNING

The 2010 Census effort wrapped up, with staff participating in the data follow-up sessions sponsored by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission.

Staff continues to provide routine services, in accordance with the Service Delivery Strategy agreement, for the municipalities of Bishop, Bogart, North High Shoals and Watkinsville.

Staff continues to work at length with real estate appraisers, banks and representatives from the FDIC verifying the stage of construction or completion on distressed and foreclosed developments under construction in the current economy.

Staff also continues to serve on the MACORTS Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC).

The Planning Department continues its role as the Development Review Committee facilitator by processing applications, routing them for review, documenting transactions, and conducting monthly DRC meetings with departmental reviewers and local developers.

Presentations were given to undergraduate students from the University of Georgia's School of Environment and Design's City Planning Classes. Lecture topics included the typical rezoning process in the state of Georgia, Development Review processes, and additional considerations in design work. Staff assisted professors and students with the compilation of data for student projects and participated in the scheduled design critiques.

Staff continues data input into the master relational database for zoning and developments. Data continues to be collected from seven different source/reference books. A majority of the rezoning and development data is complete from 1990 to present. Staff began research to enter pre-1990 development data as files are retrieved from archives on an as-needed basis. Final Plat data entry is the primary focus for database expansion in 2011 and 2012.

Existing economic conditions have brought to light changes needed for the UDC. Staff began researching the need for amendments to address necessary certification in the absence of the development's Engineer of Record. The proposed changes are slated for presentation to the BOC for their review and approval in the fall of 2011.

Research began on Agritainment and Agritourism and the possible necessity for code modification in order to address the newly rising concept within the state. Data research is expected to be completed in the Fall of 2011.

Staff participated in the first phase of the Status Review Project. The review consisted of archival file reviews and on-site inspections of 84 idle and incomplete residential developments in the county. The second phase of the project will be a similar review of the commercial projects within the county.

Planning staff also completed the following reviews: 6 rezones, 2 special uses, 11 variances, 8 preliminary plat/site plan, 10 site development plan, 26 administrative plats, 1 final plat, 2 revised final plat, and 20 sign application reviews with Oconee County Code Enforcement.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Oconee County employs individuals in many different capacities in order to provide the services demanded by the residents of Oconee County. Employees are classified into eight categories identifying their roles and reporting requirements. These categories are shown below.

	<b>As of 6/30/2011</b>
<b>Full-Time</b>	226
<b>Part-Time</b>	36
<b>Seasonal</b>	32
<b>Elected Officials</b>	10
<b>Enterprise Fund (Utility Department)</b>	20
<b>Reimbursed to County</b>	8
<b>Board Members (Elections &amp; Assessors)</b>	9
<b>Bailiffs</b>	3
<b>Total Employment</b>	<b>344</b>

## CIVIC CENTER

The Oconee County Civic Center provides meeting and performance space for a wide variety of civic organizations and private groups, in addition to public functions. The Civic Center is greatly utilized by the Oconee County School System, Oconee County Government Departments, and other private sector organizations and groups.

The sub-dividable Banquet Room is utilized for every type of event from training seminars to weddings and receptions. The fully equipped proscenium stage Theatre hosts stage shows, awards presentations, weddings, funerals, ceremonies and all types of musical events.



Usage data for the Civic Center are shown below.

	<b>FY08</b>	<b>FY09</b>	<b>FY10</b>	<b>FY11</b>
<b># School System Events Hosted</b>	219	188	210	171
<b># County Government Events Hosted</b>	53	91	51	83
<b># Private Events Hosted</b>	185	165	138	140
<b># Total Events Hosted</b>	457	444	399	394

# GEORGIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM

## 4-H & YOUTH

*Lauren Healey, Joey Bristol & Marcus Eason*



Oconee County 4-H Agent & Program Assistant developed educational programming to more than 700 youth during the 2010-2011 4-H year:

- 10 members won a state championship and were named Master 4-Hers.
- 3 members served on, and one member was elected to, the Northeast District 4-H Board of Directors.
- 4 members performed with Clovers and Company, the Georgia 4-H statewide performing group.
- 7 were selected as 4-H camp counselors.
- The Dairy Quiz Bowl team won state championship.
- 307 contacts were made through Project Achievement and Judging Events.
- 199 attended Georgia 4-H educational camps and conferences.
- 19 youth competed in regional and state livestock shows.
- \$5,000 in 4-H scholarships was awarded to graduating seniors.
- 172 members served in leadership roles during monthly meetings.



## AGRICULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

*Monte Stephens*

Oconee County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources agent develops educational programs and responds to private citizens and commercial agri-businesses for problem solving and diagnosis purposes.

- In 2010-11, the extension agent: Submitted 730 soil, water, forage and microbiological specimens to UGA for laboratory analysis.
- Diagnosed 650 plant disease and insect damage samples.
- Authored a regular column on issues facing homeowners and farmers for *The Oconee Enterprise*.
- Served as an educational programming resource for the Clarke/Oconee Cattlemen's Association, Oconee County Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee, Oconee Clean and Beautiful Commission,
- Northeast Georgia Green Industry Association, and Oconee County Farm Bureau.
- Provided recertification training for 135 private and commercial pesticide applicators.
- Provided educational awareness programming for schools and community events.

## FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES

*Denise Everson*

The Family and Consumer Sciences Agent helps improve the quality of lives for families in Oconee and Clarke Counties by providing research-based educational programs in the areas of food safety, food preservation and healthy eating habits.

- Workshops such as the **National Restaurant Association ServSafe Manager Certification** and **Cooking for Groups** help restaurants and families [reduce their risk for foodborne illness](#); hands on workshops teach consumers to [preserve and store food safely](#);
- **Walk-a-Weigh** and **Power to Prevent Diabetes** programs help our families [achieve better health by learning to select, purchase and prepare healthful foods](#), and demonstrations including
- **Cancer Prevention** and **Diabetes Cooking Schools** are offered to help consumers [decrease morbidity from chronic disease through improved nutrition practices](#).
- Fifty programs on food, nutrition and health, educating 220 citizens through educational programs and classes.
- Authored or disseminated newsletters on diabetes, child development, food safety and nutrition to 40,561 contacts. 22 programs on economic well-being for individuals and families, educating 277 citizens.



## CODE ENFORCEMENT

The mission of the Oconee County Code Enforcement department is to preserve and promote public safety, protect property rights by regulating and controlling the design, construction, occupancy, use and location of facilities within unincorporated Oconee County.

The Code Enforcement department enforces construction codes, zoning laws, state and local litter laws, environmental laws, soil erosion ordinances and all county ordinances passed by the Board of Commissioners (except animal control). The department issues all building permits, commercial and residential including plumbing, electrical, HVAC, gas, logging, signs, driveway, soil erosion, house moving, parade, road race, solicitation, swimming pool, mobile home, solid waste hauling, canvassing and underground utilities.

Code Enforcement also issues new addresses for properties, reviews commercial and residential building plans, site plans, preliminary plats and final plats for review. The Fire Marshal reviews all commercial plans and inspects commercial and residential construction for compliance with all fire codes, egress, capacity, and handicap accessibility.

	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Commercial Permits</b>	79	54	38	28
<b>Mobile Home Permits</b>	4	2	8	3
<b>Residential Permits</b>	201	66	68	82
<b>Occupation Tax Permits Issued</b>	1,296	1,281	1,234	1,209

During FY11, Code Enforcement issued 82 single-family building permits and 28 commercial permits. There were a total of 313 total permits issued when including those for additions, basement finishes, and other buildings.

Building Inspectors completed 1,061 inspections. Code Enforcement conducted 6,231 inspections for soil erosion and code violations. There were 67 non-compliance orders issued as a result of these inspections. The department issued 13 citations for code violations.

Code enforcement is also responsible for registering and collecting occupation taxes. A total of 163 new occupation tax certificates were issued and 1,046 renewals during FY11 were processed.





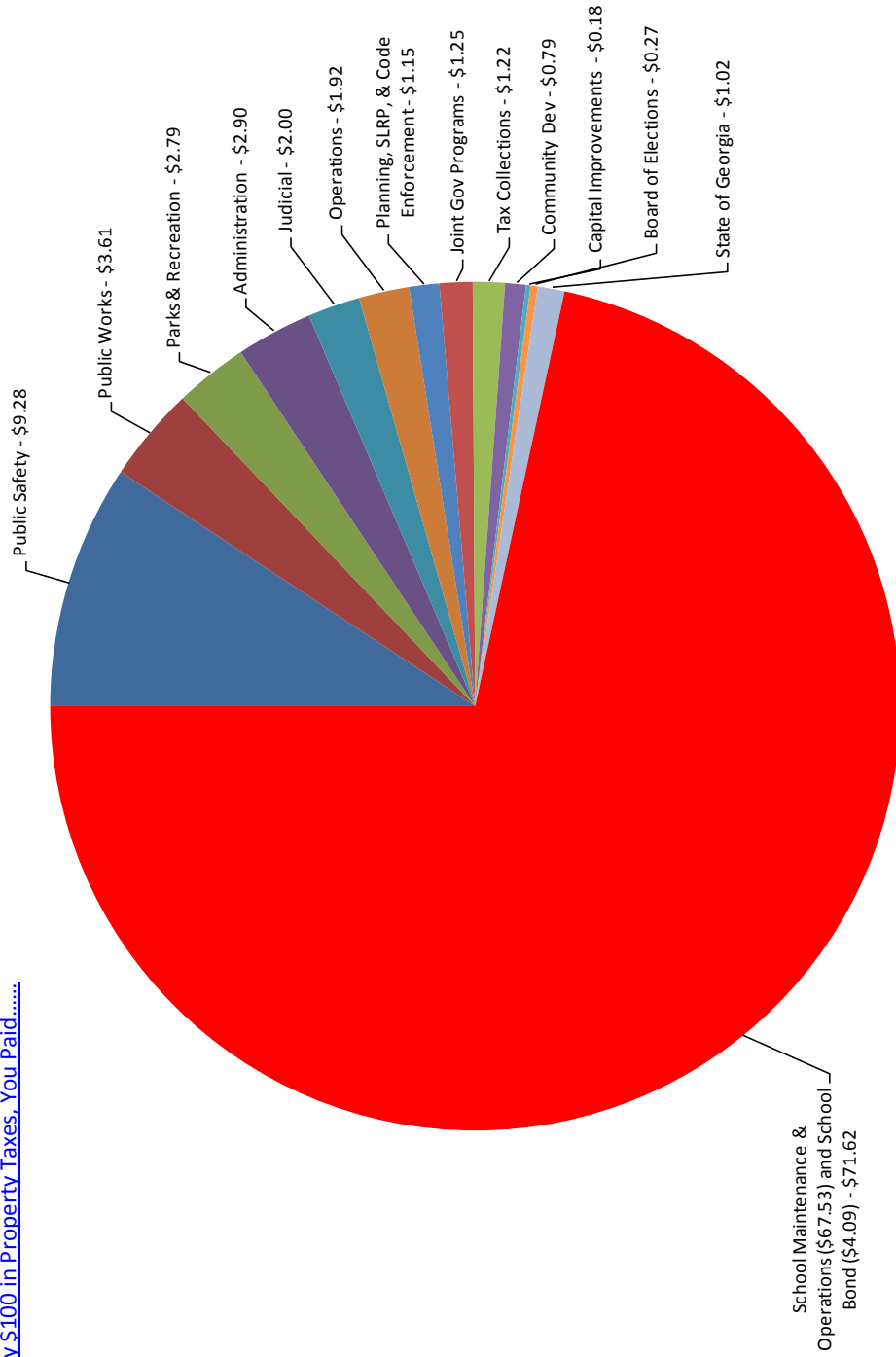
# YOUR \$2,000 TAX BILL....

27.4% BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS (\$547) – 6.68 mills (Unincorporated)

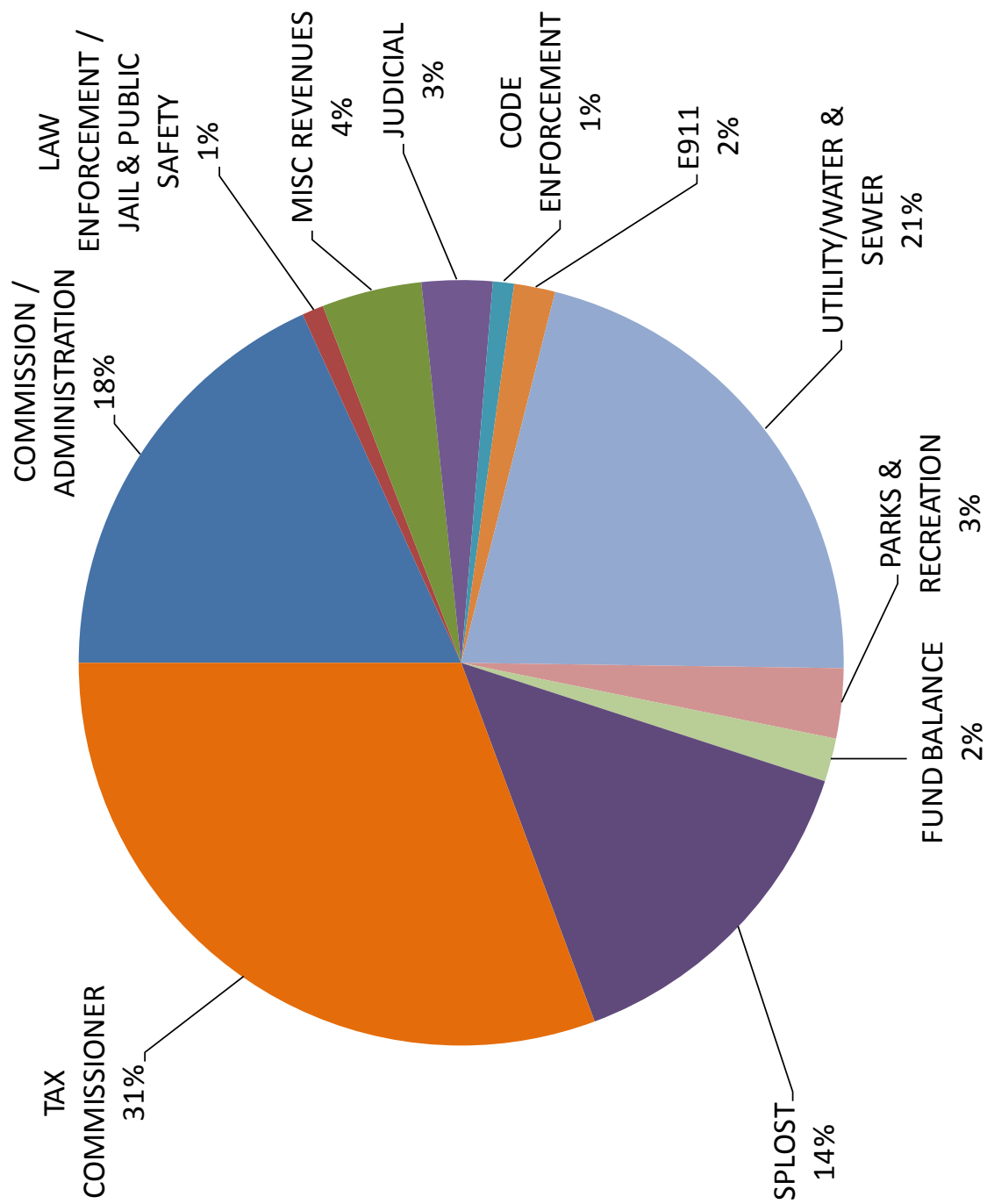
71.6% BOARD OF EDUCATION (\$1,433) – 17.50

1.0% STATE OF GEORGIA (\$20) – .25

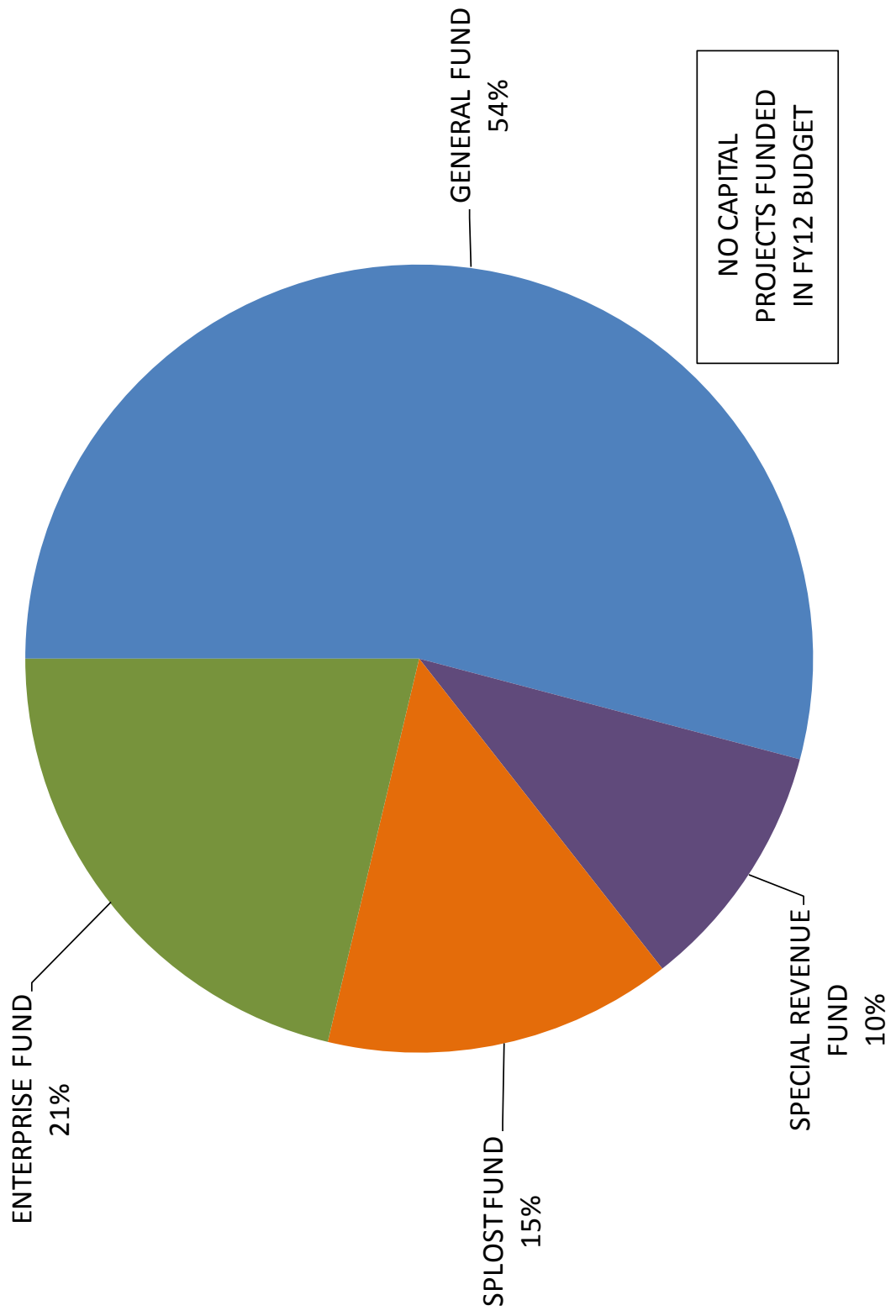
[In FY11 For Every \\$100 in Property Taxes, You Paid.....](#)



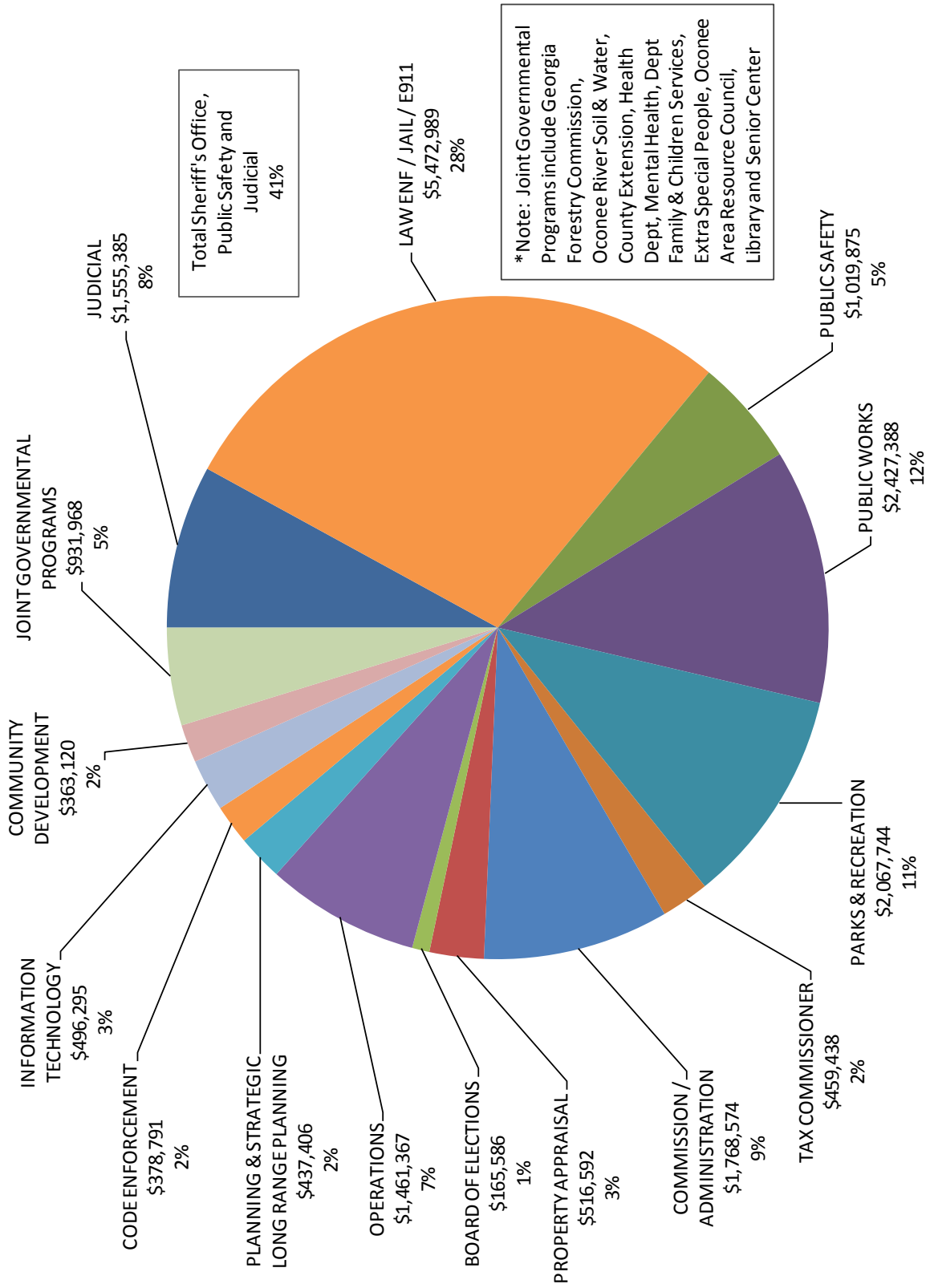
## FY12 BUDGET – ALL REVENUES - \$33,379,041



## FY12 BUDGET – ALL EXPENDITURES - \$33,379,041



# FY12 BUDGET – GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES - \$19,522,518







### **Board of Commissioners**

Melvin Davis, Chairman  
Jim Luke, Post 1  
John Daniell, Post 2  
Margaret Hale, Post 3  
Chuck Horton, Post 4

### **Constitutional Officers**

David Anglin, Probate Judge  
Scott Berry, Sheriff  
Harriette Browning, Tax Commissioner  
Angela Watson, Clerk of Courts

### **Elected Officials**

Lawton Stephens, Chief Judge  
Patrick Haggard, Judge  
David Sweat, Judge  
Ken Mauldin, District Attorney  
Ed Carson, Coroner

*Year in Review*  
*Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2011*