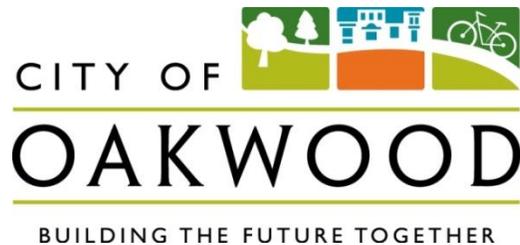


MAYOR
Lamar Scroggs

CITY COUNCIL
Martha Collins
Sam Evans
Ron McFarland
Montie Robinson, Sr.
Todd Wilson



CITY MANAGER
Stan Brown

CITY CLERK
Tangee Puckett

NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on January 29, 2014

Lower SPLOST revenues force Oakwood to scale back projects

Because of revenues falling short of projections, Oakwood has scaled back projects funded by the special purpose local option sales tax.

Like most area governments, which are now starting to consider a renewal of the tax, expected revenues from the latest SPLOST program — approved by voters in 2009 — were pummeled by the Great Recession, the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

Oakwood had projected \$3.7 million in total revenues and has so far collected \$1.7 million, with the tax set to expire next year.

“Just like everybody else, (revenues) are coming about two-thirds of (what) we hoped for, and so we’ve had to adjust based on the availability of money,” Brown said.

The city had budgeted \$1.5 million for land acquisition for the downtown improvements in its 2030 plan, \$200,000 for a traffic signal at McEver Road and H.F. Reed Industrial Parkway, \$1.2 million for road resurfacing and \$800,000 for downtown sewer improvements.

So far, it has spent \$986,143 for the land acquisition, \$200,000 for the signal and \$534,309 for resurfacing.

“We’ll start spending some dollars for (sewer efforts) this year, but it won’t be \$800,000,” City Manager Stan Brown said.

Oakwood’s biggest-ticket item is the 2030 plan efforts.

The city rolled out the plan in October 2008, with an eye toward developing and sprucing up about 250 acres around the old downtown area by 2030.

The area is largely undeveloped now, marked by older homes, a railroad line, City Park and several government buildings. The YMCA has since moved in and is operating an Oakwood branch.

Highlights of the 2030 plan include an amphitheater, a multistory City Hall and a commuter rail station that would sit along the railroad tracks running through the heart of the town. It also features connecting trails, parks and green spaces.

Some SPLOST money also was used to recoup some design expenses.

The \$800,000 sewer effort would have been an extensive effort, “as if the downtown project would have taken off,” Brown said. “Since that need is not there yet, the development hasn’t moved forward, we’ll just ... do some sewer work that’s needed.”

Oakwood is moving forward on a sewer project that would mainly serve the 20-unit Hidden Valley apartment complex, where a septic drain field has been failing for years.

The project off McClure Drive would involve laying about 1,400 feet of gravity and force-main lines and construction of a pump station.

The city has received a \$50,000 “Immediate Threat and Danger” grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to help offset costs, which have been estimated at \$225,000.

The project design should be completed in February, with construction possibly taking place in May or June, Brown has said.

Looking toward a possible future SPLOST, Brown said he hopes city and county officials “have some initial discussions to really explore what to look at in terms of strategy and whether it’s something that we should pursue or not.

“We want to see a very transparent and open process,” he said.

“We want to see a lot of citizen involvement, and we think one thing that would be critical to the success of any potential SPLOST vote would be some good oversight, a good description of projects and again, transparency.”