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Stan Brown

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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on October 3, 2011

No tax hike planned in 2012 in Oakwood

Rate to stay same for 12th year

Oakwood's 2012 budget schedule

Oct. 10: 7 p.m., first approval of 2012 tax rate

Oct. 17: 4 p.m., final OK of tax rate

Oct. 31: 6 p.m., public hearing on budget

Nov. 14: 7 p.m., budget adoption

Dec. 1: property tax bills mailed

Jan. 1: 2012 budget year begins

All meetings will take place in City Hall,
4035 Walnut Circle.

Contact: 770-534-2365.

Oakwood is proposing to keep its property tax rate the same in 2012, even though the city is losing money through lower assessments.

The city expects to see \$41,000 less in revenue by keeping the rate at 2.48 mills for the 12th straight year, with 1 mill equal to \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value and property assessed at 40 percent.

"You could roll the millage rate up to a point to equalize the amount of tax dollars you were bringing in before and it would not technically be a tax increase," City

Manager Stan Brown told City Council in presenting the 2012 budget Monday night.

"But I'm not recommending that you do that. I think we can stay within the millage rate as we currently have it."

City officials are proposing a \$3.5 million general-fund budget for fiscal 2012, which begins Jan. 1, compared to a \$3.6 million budget this year.

Generally speaking, revenues have been "very flat" this year, with the city projecting only a 0.5 percent increase, or \$15,000 more, in 2012.

Concerning expenses for the coming year, "we want to be as lean as we can and get as much done with what we have available," Brown said. "We've tried to sharpen the pencil as much as we can ... to control costs as much as possible."

The city isn't budgeting to replace two key administrators: former Assistant City Manager Patti Doss-Luna and Planning Director Larry Sparks, who retired earlier this year.

"We do want to keep those positions authorized because, at some point, we'll need to bring them back online when (economic) activity picks back up," Brown said.

In the meantime, "everyone is basically stepping up to the plate and doing more, and I think it has been good career broadening for all of our employees."

The city is proposing a 2 percent cost-of-living raise for employees.

"I realize the economy is down, but if you look at the cost of living, when you look at fuel costs over the last 12 months ... the 2 percent is just helping our employees keep up," Brown said.

Also, the city is looking at buying three new police cars and developing a fully fledged program with the Georgia Mountains YMCA in 2012.

Overall, the city's revenues will exceed expenses by about \$330,000, but Brown expects that amount will be used to cover debts and pay for maintenance and repair efforts.

"There's not a lot of new stuff in there," Brown said, summing up the budget. "I think the newest thing would be what I think will be sort of an adventure to see what happens with the parks and recreation program."

The city has contracted with the YMCA through Dec. 31 to begin development of the program, including evaluating future needs. The cost for that effort is \$12,000.

Council members had just a few minor questions but otherwise had little to say about the proposed budget. They passed on the need to hold another work session on the budget.

"I don't see any sense in it unless something comes up," Councilman Ron McFarland said.

A public hearing is set for Oct. 31 on the budget, with final adoption slated for Nov. 14. Tax bills are scheduled to be mailed Dec. 1.