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## **NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on October 3, 2009**

### **Oakwood keeping steady with proposed 2010 budget**

Tax rate could remain the same for 10th straight year

**OAKWOOD** — Oakwood’s proposed 2010 budget shows the city is taking hits from a sour economy but not having to resort to severe cuts that other governments are weathering.

“We’re not in bad shape. We’re a lot better off than we could be,” City Manager Stan Brown said as he presented the \$3.285 million budget to City Council on Monday night.

The government projects a \$120,000 decrease in revenues, or about 3.5 percent, in such areas as the local-option sales and hotel-motel excise taxes.

And the city also expects to cut spending by \$300,000, or 9.4 percent, including holding off hiring in three vacant positions: a police officer, receptionist and human resources/finance manager.

“Our departments are being conservative in doing with what they have,” Brown said.

The good news for Oakwood residents is that city officials propose to keep the tax rate the same for the 10th straight year. The city levies 2.48 mills, with 1 mill equal to \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value.

“There’s nothing real juicy about this budget. It’s pretty bland. We’re just trying to make sure we stay within the means that we’ve got coming in,” said City Manager Stan Brown in an interview before the council meeting.

Council members had a few minor questions but otherwise commented little during Brown’s presentation.

Brown did note that the city has seen a 11 percent increase in the tax digest, or list of taxable properties, and the percentage of commercial properties versus residential has increased to 81 percent from 76 percent.

“That continues to be a good trend for us,” he said. “We look at that as being very positive, not only for the city of Oakwood, but it’s a good generator of revenue for the county and the (Hall County Board of Education).

“We’ve been blessed with good location and good leadership ... from our mayor and council.”

Brown said he is hopeful, too, that the economy will improve as major road improvements wrap up in the area.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is about to finish a \$75 million project involving Interstate 985 at Mundy Mill Road. That project also involves a new interchange at Atlanta Highway.

Also, the DOT is extending the four-lane Thurmon Tanner Parkway from Plainview Road to Mundy Mill Road.

Brown said Merchant Crossing shopping center on Mundy Mill Road is undergoing a face-lift. "I think they're getting prepared for when Thurmon Tanner Parkway comes in," he added.

City Council is set to consider the budget next at 6 p.m. Monday. A public hearing is set for 6 p.m. Nov. 2, with budget adoption set for Nov. 9.

Concerning the tax rate, first approval is set for Monday and final OK is set for Oct. 19.

Tax bills will be mailed Dec. 1 and the 2010 budget becomes effective Jan. 1