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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on November 9, 2009

Oakwood City Council OKs 2010 budget

OAKWOOD — The Oakwood City Council voted Monday night to approve a general-fund 2010 budget of \$3.285 million.

The 2010 budget becomes effective Jan. 1, with tax bills set to be mailed Dec. 1 and due Feb. 1.

To help fund the budget, the council voted last month to set the tax rate at 2.48 mills, with 1 mill equal to \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value. The tax rate will remain the same for the 10th straight year.

“What we’ve presented to you is a budget that ... maintains current levels of service without any staffing increases,” City Manager Stan Brown told the council.

“It maintains our commitment to our employees in terms of their compensation and benefits. It keeps our operating expenses within our operating revenues, and it also sets priorities for how we use those ... revenues.”

The city also has a \$620,000 budget governing its 1-cent sales tax revenues, with that money targeted largely for downtown sewer work, Brown said.

Oakwood also has a nearly \$6 million sewer fund “that includes capital and debt service related to expanding our sewer service into the Mulberry basin, as well as any expansion we can do in the Chattahoochee basin,” he added.

In other business, the council voted to amend city code to prohibit package stores within neighborhood business districts but allow them within highway business districts “only as sole tenants of a freestanding building.”

A highway business package store could not sit next to property zoned to allow a church or any residential district.

The council held a public hearing on the matter, but no one spoke in support or opposition.

The catalyst for the city code change, City Planner Larry Sparks said after the meeting, was a proposal for a package store on Atlanta Highway near Cresthill townhomes and apartments.

Property owner Terry Cohron had asked council in August to approve the application on behalf of Topsy Package.

The issue drew opposition from area residents and members of nearby Blackshear Place Baptist Church.

Council ended up voting down the application.

Also Monday night, the council voted to rezone 7.66 acres off Osborne Road to planned residential development from Hall County highway business/agricultural-residential. The council also gave its first OK to annexing the property.

The proposal drew a few comments from Osborne Drive resident Denise Jordan, who said the “character of (the road) has been in transition since 1996.”

At one point, the Hall County commission OK’d a 40-home subdivision at the end of the road “that has changed Osborne Drive forever,” she said.

Residents used to be part of a close-knit neighborhood with limited traffic. “Now, we have strangers everywhere, all up and down the street, all hours of the day and night,” Jordan said.

“I’m not opposed to change,” she said. “... I ask you to make sure adjustments are appropriate for our neighborhood.”