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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on September 30, 2012

Oakwood mulling tax roll-up as part of 2013 budget

Final adoption of budget set for Nov. 12

Hall County's tax digest erosion has Oakwood looking at a possible tax roll-up for 2013.

City Council absorbed a \$40,000 loss in property tax revenues in passing this year's budget at the end of 2011, and it's facing another hit in the pocketbook as it puts together the 2013 budget.

The digest is about 7.1 percent lower than it was last year, "so that results in (another) \$40,000 less revenue on the property tax side," City Manager Stan Brown said. "I'm sure it'll be a topic of discussion as to whether we do a roll-up."

A tax roll-up is an increase in the tax rate to the point where an equal amount of property tax revenues is expected.

"You can only sustain (tax revenue drops) for so long," Brown said.

Oakwood's 2013 budget year starts Jan. 1. The city's fiscal year is Jan. 1-Dec. 31, unlike many local governments, which operate on a July 1-June 30 fiscal year.

This year's budget, adopted Nov. 14, called for \$2.7 million in operating expenses, plus another \$829,000 in debt and capital program expenses, for a total \$3.5 million budget.

And that budget was partly met by not funding two key vacant positions, assistant city manager and planning director. Brown assumed the duties of the planning director.

"As far as staffing, we're going to basically stay with what we have and continue to provide services at the same level," he said. "It looks like a very tight budget year. We're not looking at anything in terms of new projects."

A couple of police car replacements are planned, but "that's just maintaining what we have," Brown said. "We'll do some road resurfacing out of our (special purpose local option sales tax) dollars, which will be reduced this year as well."

A final proposed budget for 2013 is still in the works, Brown said.

City Council is holding a called meeting at 4 p.m. today at City Hall, 4035 Walnut Circle, as a budget work session.

The council is set to hold a first reading on the 2013 tax rate at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting, set for 7 p.m. Oct. 8.

The city's tax rate is 2.48 mills — the same for the 12th straight year — with 1 mill equal to \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value.

Brown said he expects to present the 2013 budget at a called meeting set for 4 p.m. Oct. 15, when the council also is set to give its final OK to the tax rate.

A public hearing on the budget is set for 6 p.m. Oct. 29. Adoption of the budget is set for 7 p.m. Nov. 12.