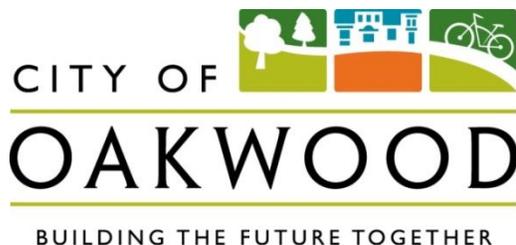


MAYOR
Lamar Scroggs

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



CITY MANAGER
Stan Brown

CITY CLERK
Tangee Puckett

NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on September 15, 2015

Oakwood holding public hearings on tax rate

Although the same as last year, rate is higher than rollback millage

Oakwood is proposing to keep its 2016 tax rate the same as it is this year, but that still means higher taxes for those who have seen property values rise through reassessment.

The South Hall city is proposing a rate of 4 mills in fiscal 2016, which begins Jan. 1, instead of 3.6 mills, the rollback rate, which would produce the same amount of revenue that was produced this year.

If the city opted for the lower tax rate, the loss in revenue would be about \$100,000, City Manager Stan Brown said.

“It’s not a lot of money,” but the city has some heavy expenses, Brown said.

He particularly cited debt stemming from land buys as part of the city’s long-range development plan, Oakwood 2030, and right of way purchases for Thurmon Tanner Parkway.

Also, “we still have to pay back another year of \$167,000 to the sewer fund based on the (May 2013) storm event that wiped out McEver Road culvert,” Brown said.

The city is planning public hearings Monday, Oct. 6 and Oct. 12. The three meetings are set to start at 6 p.m. and will take place at Oakwood City Hall, 4035 Walnut Circle.

Before 2015, Oakwood had kept its tax rate mostly steady for about 15 years, with a rate of 2.658 mills in 2014. One mill equals \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value, with property assessed at 40 percent.

A move last year to increase the rate to 4 mills — or by nearly 50 percent — brought protests from some city residents. They complained the increase was too severe and would hurt people still reeling from the 2007-09 Great Recession.

But city officials said they were hamstrung by a low cash flow, with Brown at one point saying the city was “living month to month, payday to payday.”

City officials are still working through the 2016 budget, with plans to adopt it Nov. 9, he said Tuesday.

“I see a pretty lean year again,” Brown said. “Capital projects will be very minimal.”

He is encouraged by a burst in development in the city, particularly along Mundy Mill Road.

Restaurants and new stores are popping up, and a new car dealership, Milton Martin Toyota, is about to open soon.

“I’m hopeful that over the next two or three years, we’ll see some continued growth in the (tax) digest, which should help us continue operations and pay down some debts,” Brown said.