

Oconee County, Georgia Annual Report 2020



Rural Roots and Outstanding Quality of Life

Chairman's Letter



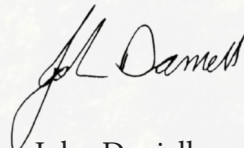
John Daniell
Chairman
jdaniell@oconee.ga.us

The year 2020 brought many challenges for our citizens and our government, but I am proud to say that our Oconee County community came together during this challenging time and emerged stronger than ever. Neighbors stepped up to help each other, and we all took time to reflect on what is truly important.

I am also proud to say the departments and offices of Oconee County Government tackled the difficulties of the past year head on and came up with new and innovative solutions to continue to serve our residents. From online portals enabling users to take care of county business at any time of day or night to virtual and socially-distanced programming to continue to deliver important services, Oconee County continued to meet the needs of those we serve while being mindful of new health guidelines and protocols.

We are confident we can continue to move forward together whatever the circumstances. And, as always, my door is open. Feel free to reach out to me via email or phone and let me know your thoughts and concerns.

Sincerely,



John Daniell

Board of Commissioners



Mark Thomas
Commissioner, Post 1
mthomas@oconee.ga.us



Amrey Harden
Commissioner, Post 3
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Commissioner, Post 4
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County Budget Expenditures

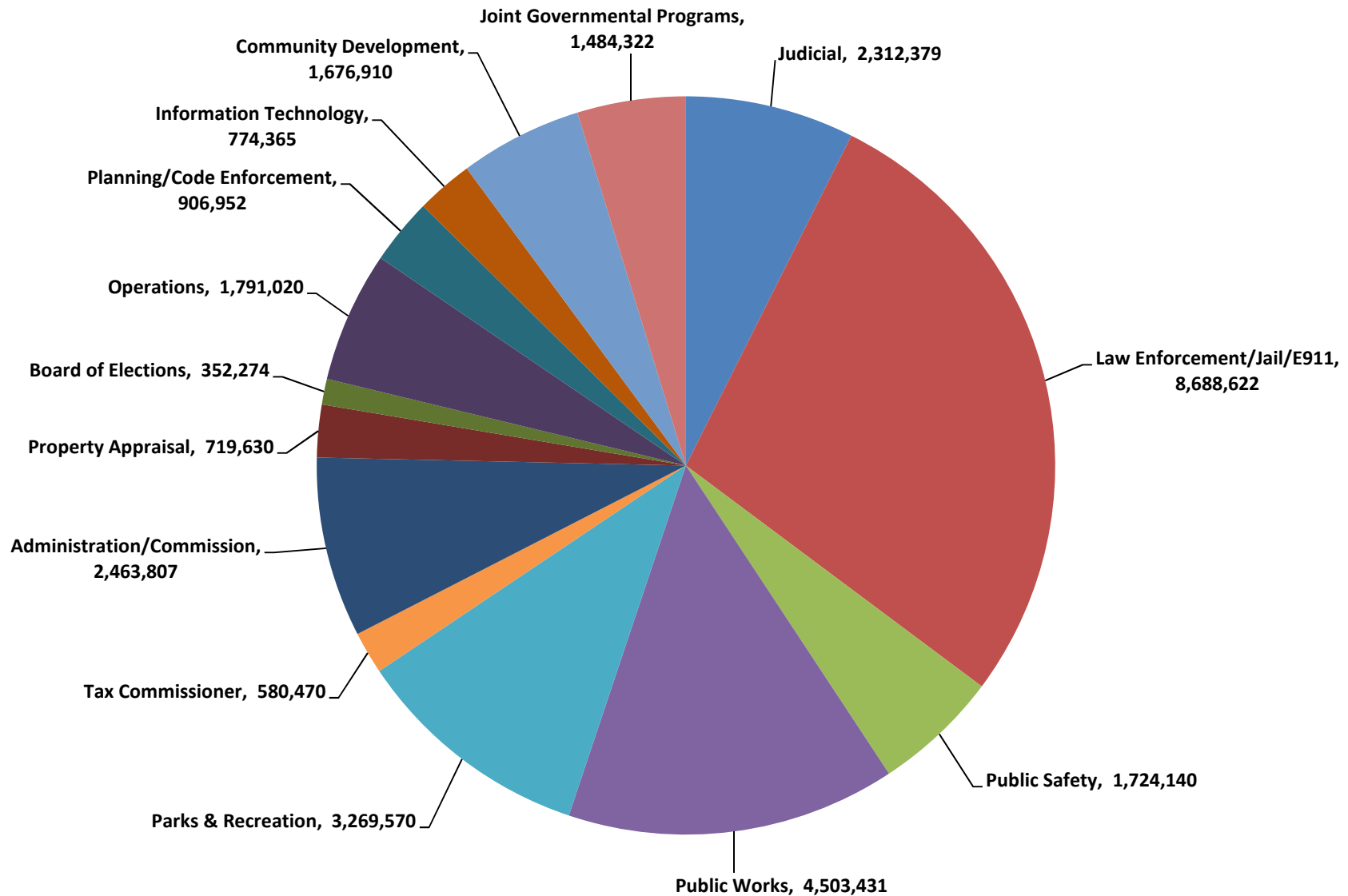
FY21 Budget General Fund Expenditures

Function	Amount
Law Enforcement/Jail/E911	\$ 8,688,622
Public Works	\$ 4,503,431
Parks & Recreation	\$ 3,269,570
Administration/Commission	\$ 2,463,807
Judicial	\$ 2,312,379
Operations	\$ 1,791,020
Public Safety	\$ 1,724,140
Community Development	\$ 1,676,910
Joint Governmental Programs	\$ 1,484,322
Planning/Code Enforcement	\$ 906,952
Information Technology	\$ 774,365
Property Appraisal	\$ 719,630
Tax Commissioner	\$ 580,470
Board of Elections	\$ 352,274
Total	\$ 31,247,892

*Budget as originally adopted July 1, 2020

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

FY21 Budget - General Fund Expenditures



County Budget Revenues

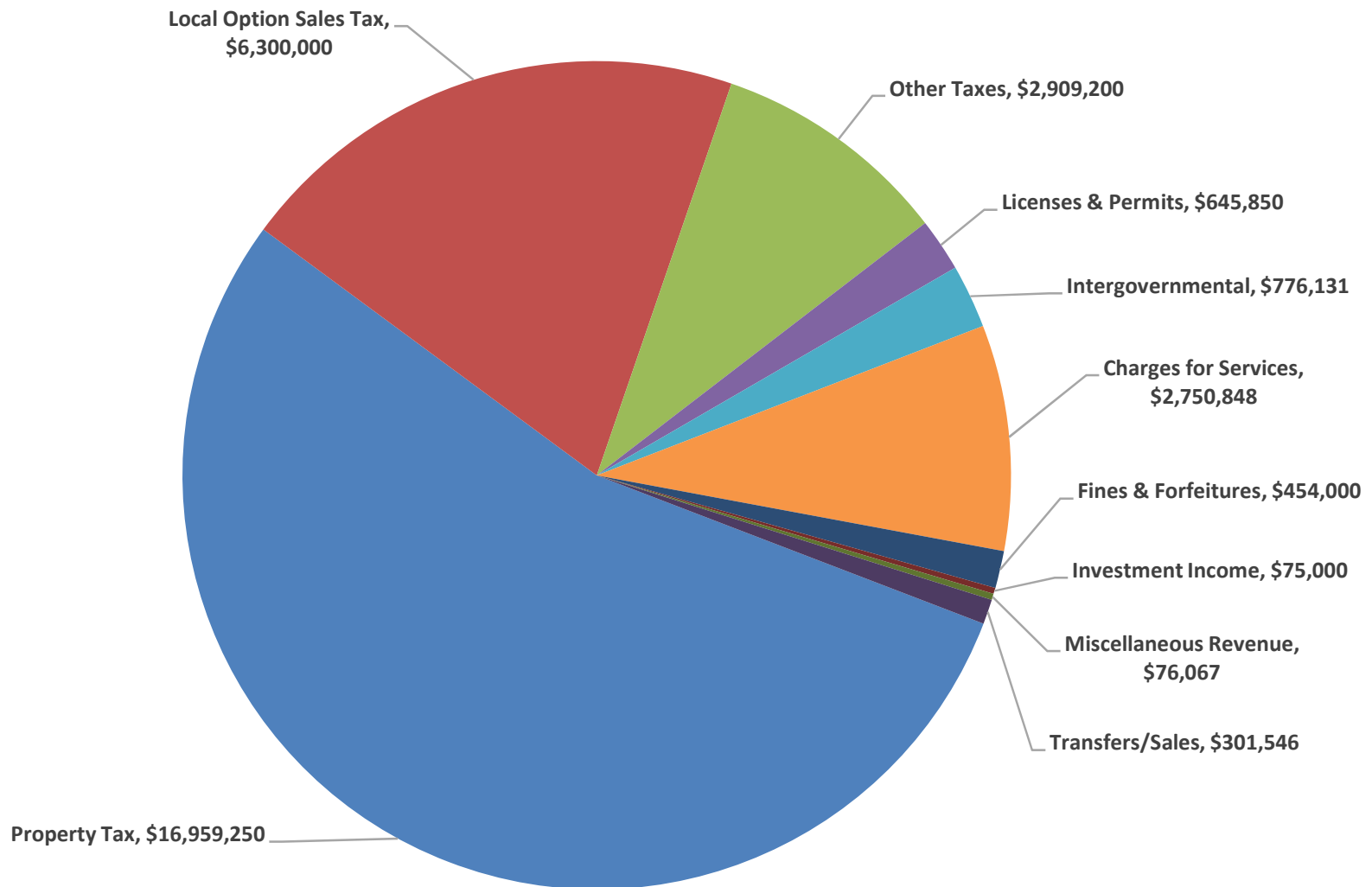
FY21 Budget General Fund Revenues

Function	Amount
Property Tax	\$ 16,959,250
Local Option Sales Tax	\$ 6,300,000
Other Taxes	\$ 2,909,200
Licenses & Permits	\$ 645,850
Intergovernmental	\$ 776,131
Charges for Services	\$ 2,750,848
Fines & Forfeitures	\$ 454,000
Investment Income	\$ 75,000
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 76,067
Transfers/Sales	\$ 301,546
Total	\$ 31,247,892

*Budget as originally adopted July 1, 2020

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

FY21 Budget General Fund Revenues





Water Resources

Oconee County Water Resources is an award-winning department, recognized for meeting industry standards for capacity, management, operation, and maintenance.

Focused on maintaining and improving the water infrastructure, Water Resources regularly conducts smoke tests of sewer pipe, uses a CCTV program for inspection of sewer mains, and recently upgraded to all new Neptune meters and installed new antennas for remote meter reading. Implementation of SL-Rat, a new pipe condition assessment tool utilizing acoustic soundwaves to assess clogs, has increased efficiency by eliminating the need for cleaning pipes that are already in good condition. In partnership with Oconee County Fire Rescue, fire hydrants are tested annually and repaired as necessary to ensure they are ready when needed.

- New backflow program for testing of commercial properties
- Initiated construction of new 750,000-gallon water tank
- Completed installation of 12" water main on Union Church Road
- Leak detection completed for 25% of water system

“Huge accomplishments are made when you have a dedicated and skilled team that works hard every day.”

Tim Durham
Water Resources Director

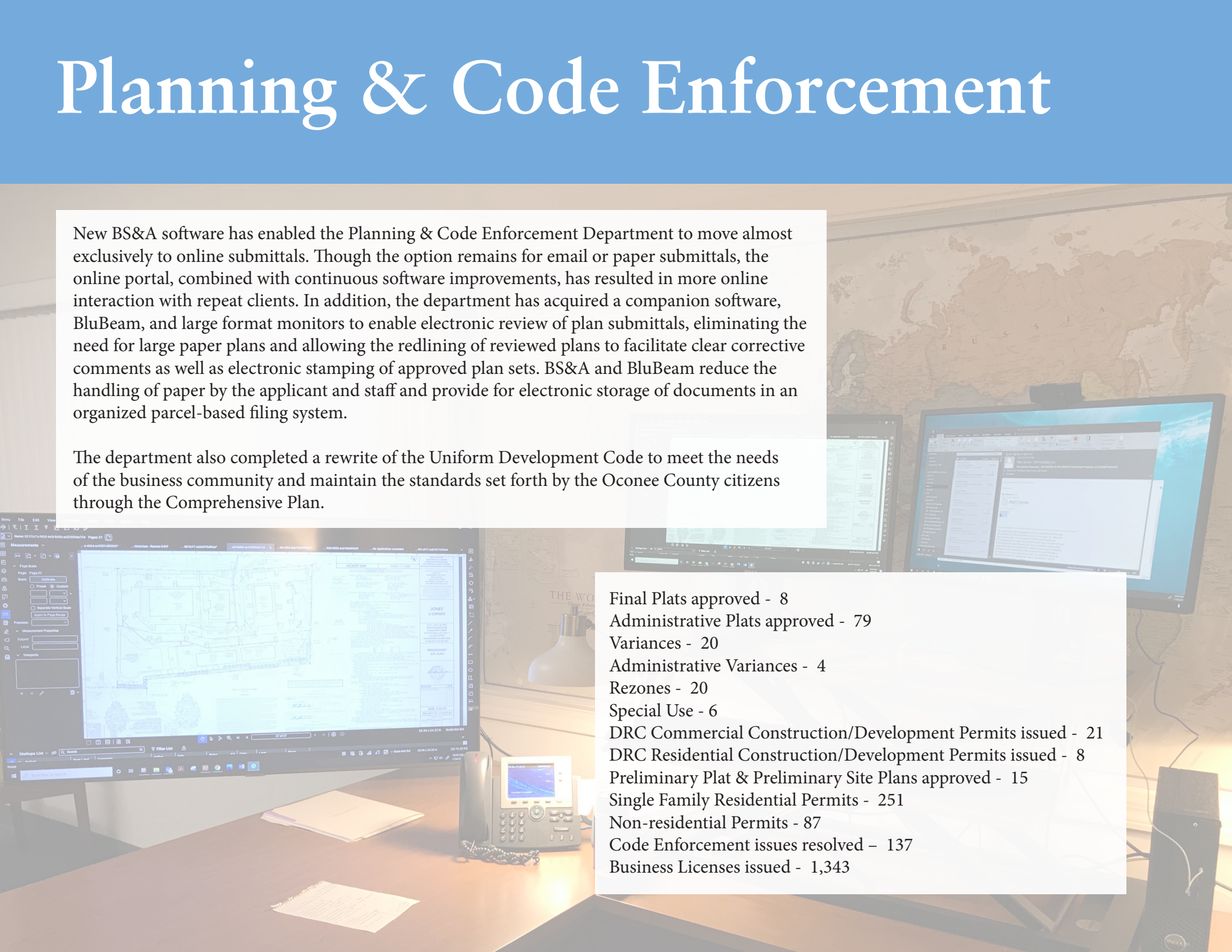
Georgia Association of
Water Professionals (GAWP)
Recognition

- Water System Platinum Award
- Collection System Gold Award
- Wastewater Plant Gold Award

Planning & Code Enforcement

New BS&A software has enabled the Planning & Code Enforcement Department to move almost exclusively to online submittals. Though the option remains for email or paper submittals, the online portal, combined with continuous software improvements, has resulted in more online interaction with repeat clients. In addition, the department has acquired a companion software, BluBeam, and large format monitors to enable electronic review of plan submittals, eliminating the need for large paper plans and allowing the redlining of reviewed plans to facilitate clear corrective comments as well as electronic stamping of approved plan sets. BS&A and BluBeam reduce the handling of paper by the applicant and staff and provide for electronic storage of documents in an organized parcel-based filing system.

The department also completed a rewrite of the Uniform Development Code to meet the needs of the business community and maintain the standards set forth by the Oconee County citizens through the Comprehensive Plan.



Final Plats approved - 8
Administrative Plats approved - 79
Variances - 20
Administrative Variances - 4
Rezones - 20
Special Use - 6
DRC Commercial Construction/Development Permits issued - 21
DRC Residential Construction/Development Permits issued - 8
Preliminary Plat & Preliminary Site Plans approved - 15
Single Family Residential Permits - 251
Non-residential Permits - 87
Code Enforcement issues resolved - 137
Business Licenses issued - 1,343

Public Works/Transportation

In 2020, Public Works resurfaced 8.04 miles of road and completed 28.6 miles of striping.

Roundabouts at Malcom Bridge Road and Malcom Bridge Elementary and Middle Schools were also completed to improve vehicle circulation and safety.

Site improvements at the Macon Highway Collection and Recycling Center, including a cul-de-sac at the gate and construction of a wall to allow for additional dumpsters, increased accessibility for customers and made this location more user-friendly.



Oconee County Fire Rescue graduated six volunteer members with a 205-hour National Firefighter 1 Certification and ten volunteer members with a 120-hour Emergency Medical Responder Certification. Fire Rescue volunteers are trained to the highest professional standard and serve Oconee County with unwavering dedication.

Station 1 Watkinsville

7580 Macon Highway
Watkinsville, GA 30677

Station 2 Farmington

2590 Old Farmington Road
Watkinsville, GA 30677

Station 4 Dark Corner

7620 Hog Mountain Rd
Statham, GA 30666

Station 5 East Oconee

4931 Greensboro Highway
Watkinsville, GA 30677

Station 6 High Shoals

200 Hillsboro Rd
Bishop, GA 30621

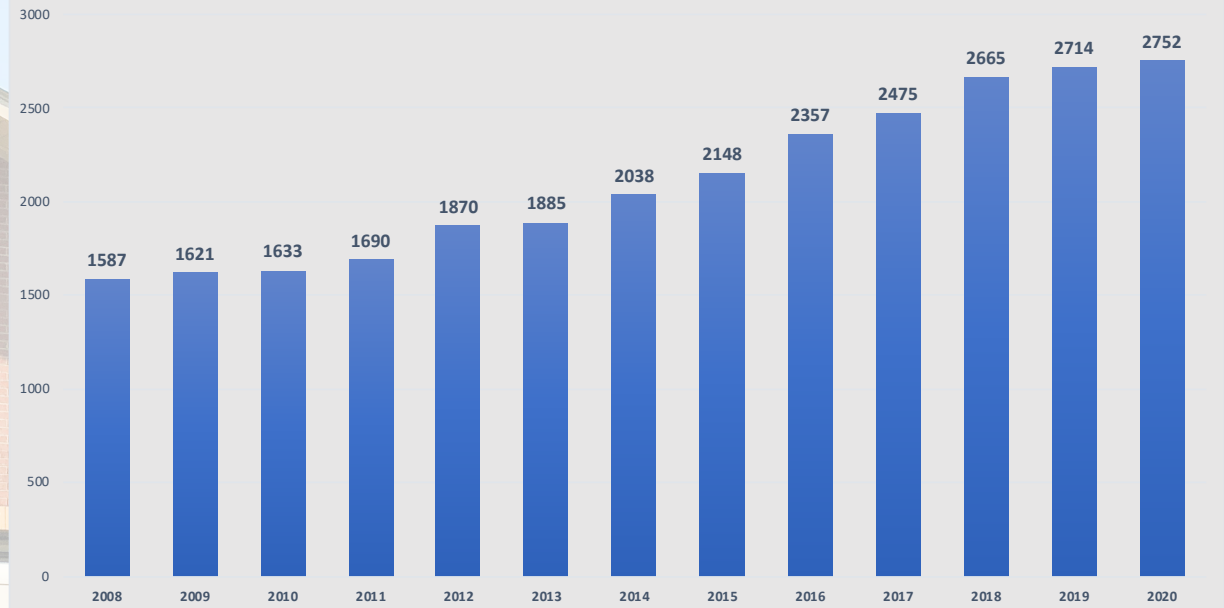
Station 7 Bogart

1931 McNutt Creek Rd
Bogart, GA 30622

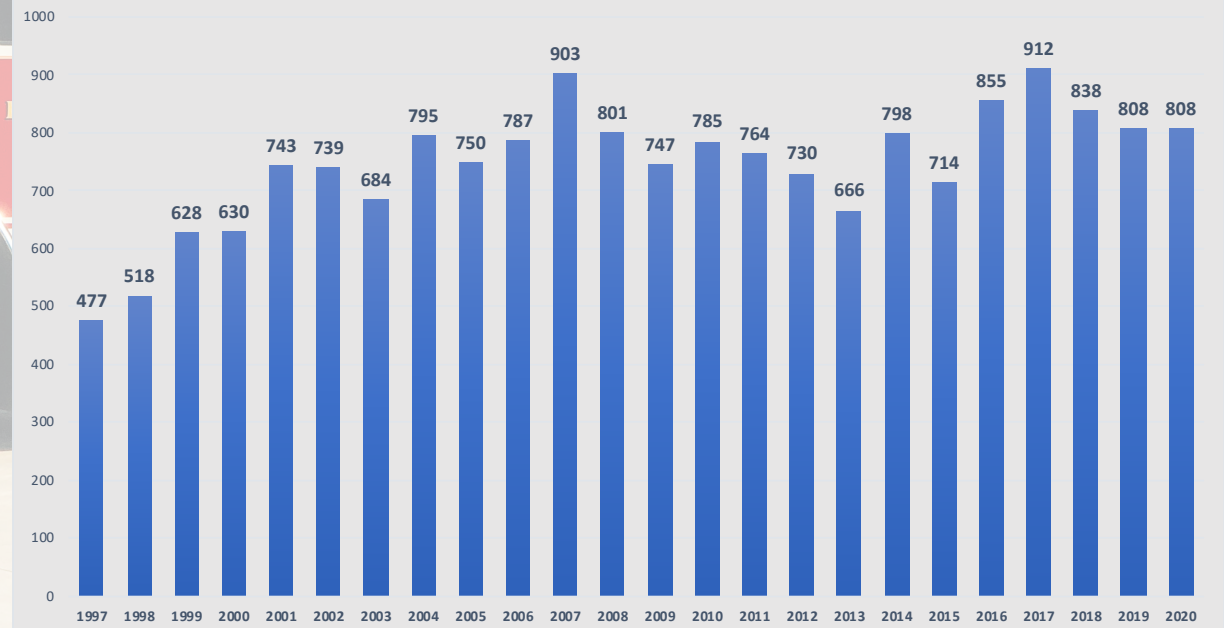
Station 8

1600 Virgil Langford Road
Watkinsville, GA 30677

13-Year Medical Call Response Comparison



24-Year Fire Call Response Comparison



Fire Rescue



Station 5 Bay Addition

The Fire Rescue Department constructed a 20' x 45' truck bay to accommodate a new larger engine and replaced a 6,000-gallon water storage tank with a 10,000-gallon tank, which is used to refill tanker trucks.

New Engine 501 (shown above)

Capable of pumping 1,500 gallons per minute with a 1,000-gallon capacity water tank, Engine 501 has a custom cab which seats a driver and three additional firefighters. The engine is a “clean cab” concept design, in which all self-contained breathing apparatus gear is stored in a compartment in the body of the vehicle and not inside the cab. The clean cab concept reduces carcinogens that firefighters are exposed to from contaminants left on the equipment after fires.

This vehicle is the sixth engine and eighth fire rescue vehicle purchased since 2003 from manufacturer Sutphen Corporation. Oconee County Fire Rescue continues to update and standardize the fire vehicle fleet, which expedites repairs and maintenance and allows volunteers to become thoroughly skilled in the operation of a single brand of truck.

These projects were both funded with proceeds from the 2015 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST).

Park Projects

- Oconee Veterans Park Community Center water infiltration project completed
- 8 tennis courts resurfaced at Oconee Veterans Park
- 6 tennis courts and 2 QuickStart tennis courts resurfaced at Herman C. Michael Park

Georgia Recreation & Parks Association Awards

- District 7 Agency of the Year
- District 7 Programmer of the Year - Daniel Cochran
- State and District 7 Volunteer of the Year - Mincy Moffett

Park Locations

Bogart Sports Complex 200 S. Burson Street,
Bogart

Heritage Park 2543 Macon Highway, Watkinsville

Herman C. Michael Park 1051 Elder Road, Bishop

Oconee Veterans Park 3500A Hog Mountain
Road, Watkinsville

Parks & Recreation



The Oconee County Parks & Recreation Department manages four parks and runs a vibrant program of youth and adult activities throughout the year with an ever-growing roster of participants.

Partnerships, such as the Eagle Scout Beginner Mountain Bike Trail Project and Invasive Plant Removal Volunteer workdays at Heritage Park, ensure community investment and participation in county parks and result in park improvements enjoyed by all.

Parks and Recreation again renewed its Better Sports for Kids Program Provider national designation, highlighting its commitment to providing a safe, high-quality sports environment for the next generation.

Parks & Rec by the Numbers

- 15,846 program and user group participants
- 12,206 volunteer hours given
- 16,477 open gym/fitness center check-ins
- 586 park reservations
- 629 park acres managed
- 38 athletic fields/courts maintained

* Spring and summer programs were canceled due to COVID-19



Senior Center



The Oconee County Senior Center closed on March 13, 2020, due to the pandemic. Prior to closing its doors to protect the health and safety of its members, the center served an average of 108 clients daily for activities and meals. During the center's closure, 44 homebound clients received a choice of daily hot meals, weekly frozen meal boxes, or shelf-stable meals, with approximately 12,000 meals served over the course of the year. Transportation services provided 3,833 one-way trips both for clients coming to the center prior to the pandemic and for delivering meals during the pandemic.

Though the Senior Center has remained closed to public access since March, daily contact with clients, meal service through home deliveries, and activities have continued. The center also used the time when its doors were closed to the public to complete repairs and upgrades.

The Oconee County Senior Center was awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to expand its current facility to continue to meet the needs of the county's older adults. Oconee County is one of 58 communities in Georgia that received federal community development assistance through the CDBG program administered through the state Department of Community Affairs.

As a result of a competitive grant process, the Oconee County Senior Center received \$750,000 in CDBG funds for expansion, including the creation of a 2,400-square-foot health and wellness center and additional space for arts and recreational activities. The expansion project is necessary to accommodate the center's growing clientele and will provide much-needed floor space to create a safer, more accessible area for fitness and exercise programs. The expansion will also allow the center to offer expanded programming that will provide respite to family caregivers, enrich the lives of older adults living with dementia, and increase available space for a variety of activities.



Socially-distanced bi-weekly patio exercise classes began in late summer along with weekly Bingo games, trivia games, Mystery Theatre, patio lunch and learns, knitting/crochet classes, and holiday activities. Weekly drive-through activities for drawings and prizes also encouraged members to stay involved. The center held a UGA/Department of Human Services sponsored farmer's market which provided \$21 worth of fresh produce to more than 40 participants and 30 homebound clients. Monthly nutrition education materials, crossword puzzles, and activities were sent out with newsletters, activity calendars, and letters of encouragement. Daily virtual programs and activities have netted 650 community members following and participating in activities. Community members also joined a bicycle donation project where over 55 bicycles were donated to the center to refurbish and find placement through local agencies serving families in need. The Senior Center partnered with the Oconee High School Beta Club to paint and stuff Christmas stockings for all home-delivered meal clients, and a donation of Christmas ornaments was given for each of the

home-delivered meal clients and participants that visited in December with "pop-up" drive-through activities like gingerbread house kit giveaways and Christmas cookie box giveaways.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Council Area Agency on Aging purchased new equipment and supplies for the Senior Center and shelf-stable meals for home-delivered and congregate meal clients who became homebound due to COVID. A Meals on Wheels America grant for \$10,000 was awarded to the center in order to purchase masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, and extra meals for all home-delivered meal recipients. A \$2,000 grant was awarded to the center from the Thanks Mom and Dad Foundation to purchase equipment for virtual programming and new programming opportunities when the Senior Center reopens.

Keep Oconee County Beautiful

The Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission (KOCBC), which celebrated its 30th anniversary as a Keep America Beautiful affiliate, received a 2019/2020 Governor's Circle Award, presented by the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation, in recognition of the Commission's exemplary work in litter reduction, waste minimization, and community greening.

In order to qualify for this award, the Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission conducts an annual litter index, engages volunteers to take responsibility for their community environment, and actively participates in the Keep Georgia Beautiful network.



The Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission was also recognized by the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation for a variety of accomplishments, including decreasing litter for the third consecutive year, increasing beautification projects, and providing middle and high school students in public, private, and home schools with the opportunity to take an active role in local environmental issues through Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission's Youth Advisory Council.

Cooperative Extension

4-H

Oconee County 4-H provided authentic leadership development experiences through the use of youth-led project clubs. Students leading these clubs built confidence in their leadership aptitude, improved their ability to effectively communicate thoughts and ideas, and improved problem-solving skills. Since 2017, the leadership development program has directly impacted 40 high school 4-H members. Each high school student was coached by the 4-H agent on how to plan and implement their project club. 100% of the project club leaders indicated that they “strongly agreed” that they showed growth in each objective. In addition to the project club objectives, 100% of project club leaders also indicated that they were able to apply the leadership skills they had gained through leading a project club to other areas of their life. 4-H members shared powerful statements describing how they benefited from the project club program.



Proclamation Recognizing National 4-H Week

Family and Consumer Sciences

A change in the Standard Medical Expense Deduction (SMED) in October 2015 means more food stamps for seniors (60 years and older) and those who receive Social Security disability or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. UGA Extension Family and Consumer Science educates seniors about the new policy and assists with the application process. In addition, the Senior Sense program generated and provided approximately 1,500 pounds of fresh produce to 21 low-income seniors this past year.

Agriculture

In 2020, Oconee County agriculture had a farm gate value of \$75 million for commodities, including poultry, ornamental horticulture, forages, and livestock. Local agriculture production continues to be both profitable and sustainable. Extension program development team members continue to assist local farmers with beef cattle education with an emphasis on managing forages – summer and winter annuals, genetic herd improvement, and the beginning farmer program. In addition, many residents have benefited from well water testing at the UGA Soil & Water Lab with corrections being implemented to meet EPA standards.

Elections



2020 was a year of challenges successfully met by the Elections & Registration Office. The year began with the roll-out of new voting equipment in January along with multiple training sessions. The March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary was postponed until June 9 due to COVID-19.

- June 9, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary / General Election Primary: 48.31% turnout
- November 3, 2020 General Election: 84.46% Turnout
- December 1, 2020 General Election Runoff: 30.54% Turnout
- January 5, 2021 General / Federal Election Runoff: 77.40% Turnout

The Elections office never slowed down during 2020, but continued to serve voters efficiently and graciously during unprecedented situations. New Elections Director Rebecca Anglin will continue this tradition of excellence.

Civic Center

In 2020, the Oconee County Civic Center underwent a major renovation, including installation of a video projection system in the rotunda, creation of a bridal changing room, enlargement and redesign of administrative office space, creation of new chair storage areas, installation of new tile and fixtures in public restrooms, new exterior landscaping, installation of LED lighting throughout the building, new HVAC system, new flooring, interior and exterior painting, and new counters, ice maker, and sink in the concession area.

The \$1.2 million project was funded with proceeds from the 2015 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST).

Amidst the state-mandated closure due to the pandemic, the Civic Center was able to perform these renovations and host socially-distanced early voting sessions.



Tourism & Visitors Bureau

Each year, the Oconee County Welcome Center greets thousands of visitors from across the United States and the world who travel to our community to enjoy a variety of events, activities, and attractions. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, tourism numbers across the world were down from the lack of traveling during quarantine. Once individuals felt comfortable, they started exploring with short road trips and exploring their own backyard. With that in mind, Oconee Tourism pivoted their marketing efforts by focusing on outdoor activities, virtual tours, shopping local businesses, and speaking to the traveler that is located in the Southeast instead of across the country.

Last year a total of 1,532 individuals visited the Welcome Center and the Eagle Tavern Museum in addition to the visitors that spent time in our county for weddings and business meetings despite the pandemic.

In 2020, the Oconee County Tourism & Visitors Bureau completed a rebranding and redesign of the tourism website. VisitOconee.com has a visually appealing, clean design that is easy to navigate and allows visitors to immerse themselves in what Oconee has to offer. The Welcome Center utilized the new branding by creating high-end merchandise that allowed us to open a gift shop inside the Welcome Center and online.

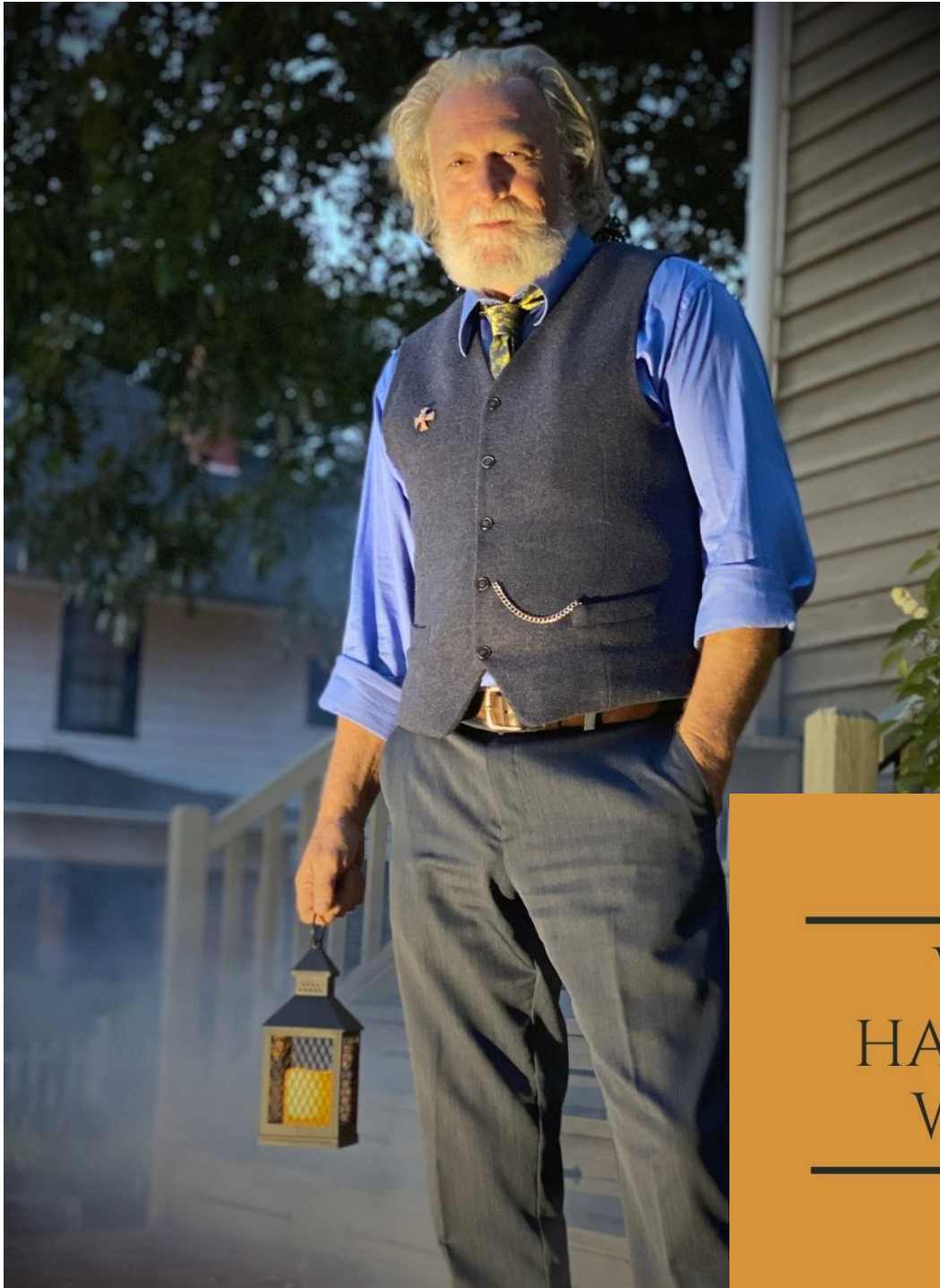
For individuals moving into our county, the center offers welcome packets that provide essential information on schools, parks and recreation facilities, utilities, shopping, restaurants, maps, and more.

The Welcome Center is a regional visitor center, so you can stop by to pick up visitor guides on cities and attractions across Georgia. Welcome Center team members will be happy to assist and provide insider information on any destination.

For more information on all things Oconee, visit www.VisitOconee.com or follow the Tourism & Visitors Bureau on Facebook and Instagram @visitocooneega.

Oconee County Welcome Center

21 North Main Street
Watkinsville, GA 30677
706-769-5197



VISIT OCONEE PRESENTS

WATKINSVILLE HAUNTED HISTORY WALKING TOUR

for all ages

Libraries

The Oconee County and Bogart Libraries made numerous changes in response to COVID-19 in order to continue to serve patrons, including adding:

- Curbside Pickup
- Virtual Storytime
- Grab-and-Go Art Kits
- Virtual Concerts
- Book Bundles

In order to adapt, the libraries moved programming and services to virtual platforms, created a new curbside system, and re-opened for in-person services with new safety protocols.

Electronic services, as always, were open 24/7, including E-books, E-audiobooks, E-Magazines, and Ancestry.com

Library Locations

Oconee County Library

1080 Experiment Station Road
Watkinsville
706-769-3950

Bogart Library

200 Burson Avenue
Bogart
706-310-3515



Animal Services

A groundbreaking ceremony in June marked the official start of construction on the Oconee County Animal Shelter renovation and expansion. The project includes renovation of the existing building, expansion of the front lobby, and the addition of a multi-purpose room. A new dog quarantine kennel, new cat quarantine kennel, and lab are also being constructed.

The Oconee County Animal Shelter is located at 1171 Branch Road, Bishop.



Quick Contact List

ACTS	770-725-2330	Human Resources	706-769-3938
Adult Literacy	706-552-0968	Jail	706-769-3930
Animal Services	706-769-3956	KOCBC	706-310-3560
Board of Commissioners	706-769-5120	Landfill – Macon Highway	706-769-3915
Board of Elections & Registration	706-769-3958	Library, Watkinsville	706-769-3950
Chamber of Commerce	706-769-7947	Library, Bogart	706-310-3515
City Hall, Watkinsville	706-769-5161	Magistrate Court	706-769-3940
Civic Center	706-769-3902	Parks & Recreation	706-769-3965
Clerk of Superior Court	706-769-3940	Planning Department	706-769-3910
Code Enforcement	706-769-3907	Police, Watkinsville – Non Emer.	706-769-7891
Collection Site – Butler’s Cross.	706-769-2916	Post Office, Watkinsville	706-769-6980
Collection Site – Highway 15	706-769-3923	Probate Court Office	706-769-3936
Collection Site – Highway 53	770-725-2421	Probation Office – Providence	706-310-4466
Collection Site – Mars Hill Rd	706-353-3660	Property Appraisal Office	706-769-3921
Communications	706-310-3556	Public Works Department	706-769-2937
Coroner’s Office	706-769-2988	Road Department	706-769-3912
County Extension/4H	706-769-3946	Sanitation (Public Works)	706-769-2937
DFCS	706-310-2260	Senior Center	706-769-3979
District Attorney	706-769-3954	Sheriff (Non Emergency)	706-769-5665
Eagle Tavern Museum	706-769-8730	Sheriff (Administration)	706-769-3945
EMA	706-310-3600	Stormwater Mgt. (Public Works)	706-769-2937
Environmental Health	706-769-7060	Tax Commissioner	706-769-3917
Family Connection	706-769-4974	USDA, FSA, NRCS	706-769-3990
Finance & Procurement	706-769-2944	Water Resources	706-769-3960
Fire Department	706-769-3975	Welcome Center	706-769-5197
Health Department	706-769-3983		

Oconee County Board of Commissioners
23 N. Main Street, Watkinsville, GA 30677
706-769-5120