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Oconee County, Georgia Annual Report 2021



Creating Connection

Chairman's Letter



John Daniell
Chairman
jdaniell@oconee.ga.us

The year 2021 provided an opportunity for us to refocus and invest in what is truly important in life - family, community, and connection.

The departments of Oconee County Government strive to provide outstanding service and to connect with our community through programs that touch the lives of all our citizens. Over 16,000 program and user group participants took part in both youth and adult activities through Parks & Recreation, and over 12,000 meals were distributed to Senior Center clients during 2021. Our libraries provided access to technology and hands-on activities, as well as classes and clubs. Oconee Fire Rescue instituted a Fire Explorers program for teens who are interested in pursuing a career in Fire or EMS. Animal Services completed a building renovation and expansion that will enable their staff to better serve the community for years to come, and Keep Oconee County Beautiful continued to provide opportunities for residents to come together to reduce litter and help beautify the entire county.

As always, my door is open. Please reach out to me via email or phone and let me know your thoughts and concerns. It is my mission to ensure that Oconee County Government continues to meet the needs of its residents in an effective, efficient, and neighborly way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Daniell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

John Daniell

Board of Commissioners



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



Amrey Harden
Commissioner, Post 3
aharden@oconee.ga.us



Chuck Horton
Commissioner, Post 2
chorton@oconee.ga.us



Mark Saxon
Commissioner, Post 4
msaxon@oconee.ga.us

County Budget Expenditures

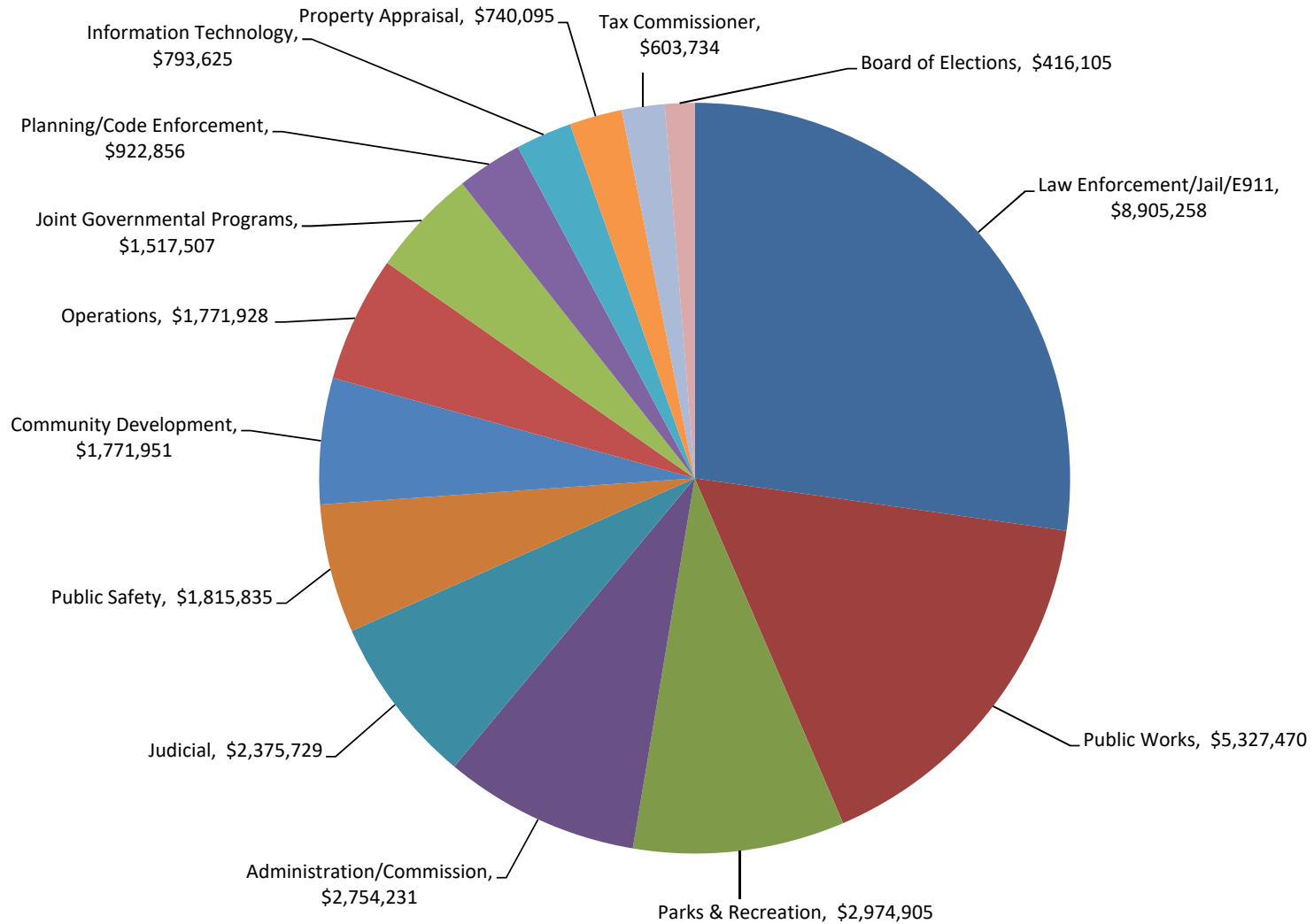
FY22 Budget General Fund Expenditures

Function	Amount
Law Enforcement/Jail/E911	\$ 8,905,258
Public Works	\$ 5,327,470
Parks & Recreation	\$ 2,974,905
Administration/Commission	\$ 2,754,231
Judicial	\$ 2,375,729
Public Safety	\$ 1,815,835
Community Development	\$ 1,771,951
Operations	\$ 1,771,928
Joint Governmental Programs	\$ 1,517,507
Planning/Code Enforcement	\$ 922,856
Information Technology	\$ 793,625
Property Appraisal	\$ 740,095
Tax Commissioner	\$ 603,734
Board of Elections	\$ 416,105
Total	\$ 32,691,229

*Budget as originally adopted

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

FY22 Budget - General Fund Expenditures



County Budget Revenues

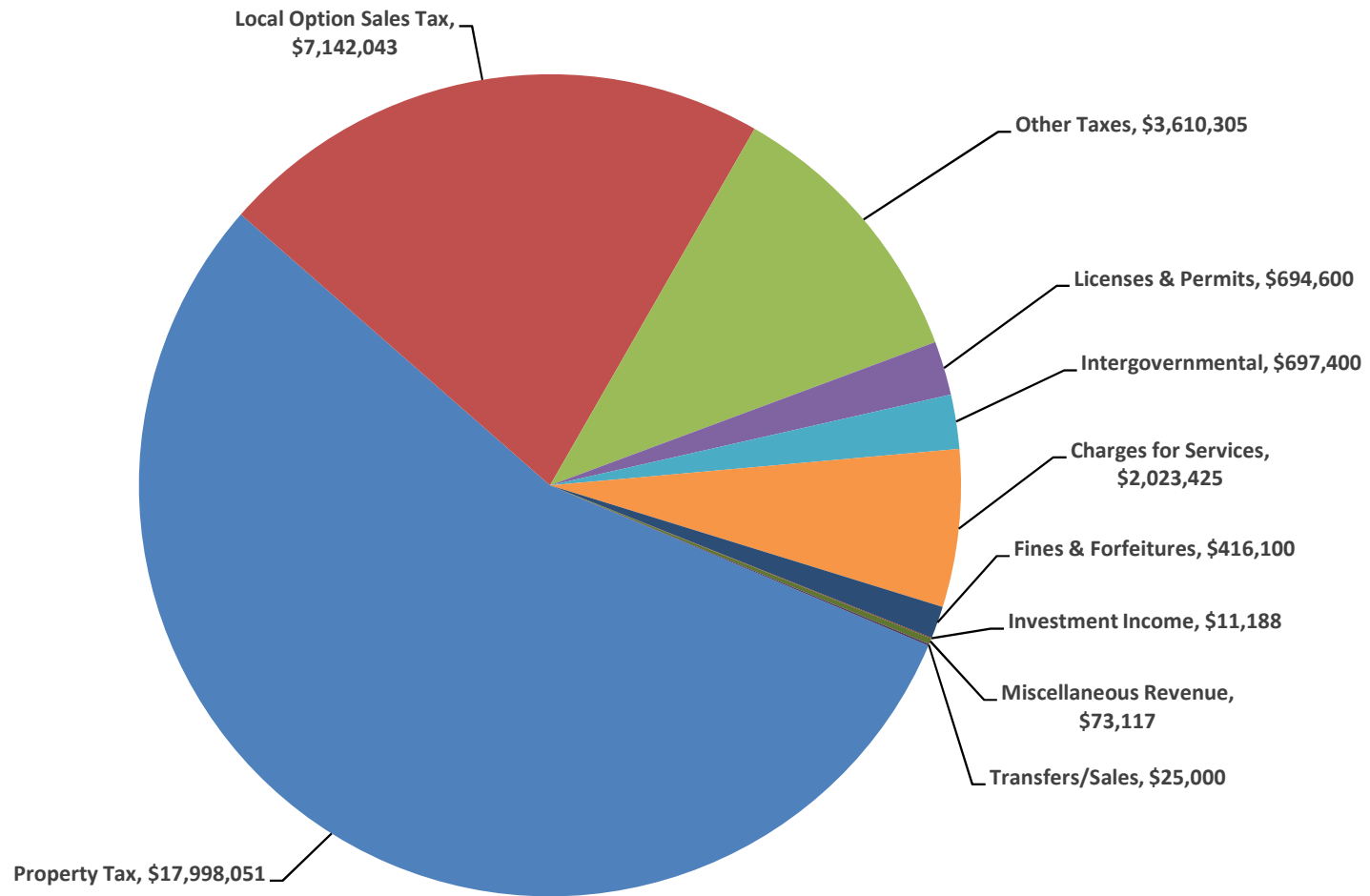
FY22 Budget General Fund Revenues

Function	Amount
Property Tax	\$ 17,998,051
Local Option Sales Tax	\$ 7,142,043
Other Taxes	\$ 3,610,305
Licenses & Permits	\$ 694,600
Intergovernmental	\$ 697,400
Charges for Services	\$ 2,023,425
Fines & Forfeitures	\$ 416,100
Investment Income	\$ 11,188
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 73,117
Transfers/Sales	\$ 25,000
Total	\$ 32,691,229

*Budget as originally adopted

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

FY22 Budget General Fund Revenues



Parks & Recreation



Parks & Rec by the Numbers

- 16,529 program and user group participants
- 17,764 volunteer hours given
- 24,886 open gym/fitness center check-ins
- 832 park reservations
- 629 park acres managed
- 38 athletic fields/courts maintained

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

- Hosted the USTA Adult State Tennis Tournament for 40 & Over with 41 teams across the state
- Hosted the Little League State Softball Tournament for 240 players
- Hosted the Georgia Interscholastic Cycling League Race with 892 middle and high school riders
- Held 10 Volunteer Workdays at Heritage Park for Invasive Species Removal
- Completed the Eagle Scout Beginner Mountain Bike Trail Project at Heritage Park

Georgia Recreation & Parks Association Awards

- State Agency of the Year Award
- District 7 Volunteer of the Year Award - Coach Jamie Antwine

Park Projects

- Oconee Veterans Park batting cage net replaced
- Herman C. Michael Park outdoor basketball courts resurfaced
- Bogart Sports Complex roofs replaced on picnic shelter, pumphouse, and switchgear buildings
- Bogart Sports Complex Maintenance Shop Building project completed
- Heritage Park Restrooms and Maintenance Shop siding and gutter project completed



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

Senior Center

Oconee County Senior Center
3500B Hog Mountain Road, Watkinsville
706-769-3979



Senior Center

The Oconee County Senior Center broke ground in July on a 2,400-square-foot health and wellness center expansion. With an expected completion date in the fall of 2022, the expansion will provide additional space for arts and recreational activities and allow the center to offer expanded programming, provide respite to family caregivers, enrich the lives of older adults living with dementia, and increase available space for a variety of activities.

“We are thrilled to be able to grow our space and offerings for older adults in our community,” said Senior Center Director Merry Howard. “This expansion project will allow us to bring our vision for a thriving and vibrant Senior Center with a broad spectrum of activities to life.”

Throughout 2021, the Senior Center worked to respond to members’ needs while navigating the pandemic era. Drive-through activities and new programs, including puzzle and book swaps, give-aways, and to-go meals, kept members involved. Activity packets, Valentine’s packets, Christmas stockings, cards, and letters were prepared and sent to homebound clients and Meals on Wheels recipients through a partnership with the Oconee County High School Beta Club. Socially-distanced activities such as Bingo, Mystery Theatre, and Crochet/Knit classes continued on the patio. The Center re-opened with a limited in-person schedule on September 1.

Though the year presented challenges, it also provided new opportunities to engage through social media, providing a way to reach seniors and community members with health and wellness information, links to exercise videos, and volunteer opportunities.

Over 12,000 meals were prepared and distributed to homebound and congregate clients during the pandemic in 2021, and staff raised \$5,665 for the local Meals on Wheels program during “March for Meals,” an annual national campaign to increase awareness of and address food insecurity, malnutrition, social isolation, and the community support needed to meet the rising demand for Meals on Wheels programs.

Libraries

The Oconee County and Bogart Libraries are active, vibrant centers of the community which offer in-person story times, educational and entertaining all-ages programming, computer assistance, a growing collection of materials including ever-expanding digital collections, and access to high-speed internet. The Library also added services in response to the pandemic including curbside pickup, virtual programs, and take-home craft kits.



2021 Library Stats:

- The library circulated over 245,000 items in the last fiscal year
- Over 5,000 people participated in library programs last year
- Patrons logged over 5,000 hours of computer usage
- 24,619 active library card users at Oconee & Bogart Libraries

New Library Services:

- Take-and-make crafts and activities for all ages
- Game and Puzzle Collections
- “Get Library Carded” promotion during Library Card Sign-Up Month featuring discounts at local businesses
- A Seed Library encourages patrons to start their own fresh vegetable gardens

Ongoing Library Services:

- Access to technology (Wi-Fi Hotspots, Chromebooks, audio editing software, high speed internet access, and more)
- Family literacy events
- Art exhibits
- Hands-on arts/activities for all ages
- Online resources (digital eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, GALILEO, language learning, test prep, career)
- Museum and park passes for checkout
- Book clubs
- STEAM programming
- Computer classes
- Genealogy research
- Culinary literacy classes
- Ukulele, children’s learning kits complete with books and hands-on STEAM activities
- Free and accessible meeting space for community groups
- Community partnerships with Keep Oconee County Beautiful, OCAF, Visit Oconee, the Chamber, and more!
- Active Library Friends group with twice annual book sale



Library Locations

Oconee County Library

1080 Experiment Station Road
Watkinsville
706-769-3950

Bogart Library

200 Burson Avenue
Bogart
706-310-3515



Civic Center

An outstanding resource for the entire community, the Oconee County Civic Center is available to host a variety of events in its Performing Arts Theater and Banquet Room and has seating for up to 500 attendees.

In 2021, the Civic Center was host to early voting and jury selection proceedings, as well as Town Hall Meetings and COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

The Civic Center also continued to support the community off-site by providing production equipment and technical expertise for events including the Veteran's Day Memorial at Oconee Veterans Park and the Watkinsville Christmas Celebration.



Tourism & Visitors Bureau



2021 Overview

2,067 individuals visited the Welcome Center and the Eagle Tavern Museum in addition to the visitors who spent time in our county for leisure and business travel.

VISITOCONEE.COM



◀ Oconee County is an established Camera Ready Community in Georgia. In 2021, Camera Ready Liaison Kristy Johnson secured a movie with Netflix, a TV series with Lifetime and a commercial with Frame 88 Multimedia. Additional productions have been filmed at private properties throughout Oconee.

▲ Guided tours became a big activity for tourism in 2021. "Walking tours are always a fun way to explore" says Joann Hubert who is the Marketing & Tourism Assistant at the Oconee Welcome Center. In 2021 she booked over 22 guided tours.

[FOLLOW US @VISITOCONEEGA](https://www.instagram.com/VISITOCONEEGA)

Fire Rescue



Fire Explorers

Oconee County Fire Rescue created a Fire Explorers Program for young men and women who want to pursue a career in Fire or EMS and volunteer with Oconee Fire Rescue. This program is designed for teens ages 14 to 18 who are residents of Oconee County. Fourteen young men and women currently serve in the Fire Explorers Program.

National Firefighter Certifications

Oconee County Fire Rescue graduated four volunteer members with a 210-hour National Firefighter 1 Certification and seven volunteer members with a 75-hour National Firefighter 2 Certification. Fire Rescue volunteers are trained to the highest professional standard and serve Oconee County with unwavering and tireless dedication.

Response Time to Fire and Medical Calls

Oconee County Fire Rescue responded to 845 fire calls and 3,050 medical calls in 2021 with an average response time of 7.74 minutes.

Fire Rescue



New Custom Pumper Truck

A new Sutphen Heavy-Duty Custom Pumper Truck joined the fleet at Fire Station 2. Engine 201 was funded with proceeds from the 2015 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Capable of pumping 1,500 gallons per minute with a 1,000-gallon capacity water tank, Engine 201 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.

Locations:

Station 1 Watkinsville

7580 Macon Highway, Watkinsville

Station 2 Farmington

2590 Old Farmington Road, Watkinsville

Station 4 Dark Corner

7620 Hog Mountain Rd, Statham

Station 5 East Oconee

4931 Greensboro Highway, Watkinsville

Station 6 High Shoals

200 Hillsboro Rd, Bishop

Station 7 Bogart

1931 McNutt Creek Rd, Bogart

Station 8

1600 Virgil Langford Road, Watkinsville

Animal Services



Oconee County Animal Services
1171 Branch Road, Bishop
706-769-3956

Animal Services



Building Renovation Complete

A “Leash Un-Clipping” ceremony in May marked the official completion and unveiling of the Oconee County Animal Service’s building renovation and expansion project, which included the addition of a new dog quarantine kennel, new cat quarantine kennel, and lab.

“We are proud to help bring the goals of Oconee County to life by providing an Animal Services facility that is safe, practical, and inviting for animals, staff, and visitors,” said Oconee Animal Services Manager Crystal Berisko. “The recent completion of the renovation and expansion project will allow us to care for the animals and to expand our programs in ways that will support the community for years to come.”

Cooperative Extension

The Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office provides numerous services to residents in the areas of Agriculture & Natural Resources, Family & Consumer Sciences, and 4-H & Youth Development. 4-H programs are extremely popular in the Oconee County community, providing leadership development and citizenship opportunities, communication skills building, and environmental education. In addition, Oconee County Extension provides services including water and soil testing/analysis, food safety and preservation programs, continuing education for early childhood professionals, University of Georgia Virtual Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, and the Senior Grocery Bag Nutrition Program.



Proclamation Recognizing National 4-H Week

Oconee County Extension Impact Highlights

- 4-H partnered with public and private schools in Oconee County to deliver leadership and citizenship programs resulting in 4-H'ers participating in over 600 hours of community service projects
- Family and Consumer Science programming addressed chronic disease prevention by partnering with ACTION's Senior Grocery Bag Nutrition Program providing approximately 1,500 pounds of fresh produce to 21 low-income seniors
- Through soil and water testing, Oconee Extension improved residents' water quality and producers' crop yield by processing approximately 500 soil samples and 350 water samples annually

Oconee County Extension Office

1420 Experiment Station Road, Watkinsville
706-542-7078

Elections



“Elections is a world that is constantly changing, providing challenges and adaptation to new laws that impact our day to day work. Oconee County Board of Elections is proud that we offer exceptional customer service. Fair, true, and accurate reporting of elections. Professionalism, dedication and democracy to all we serve.”

Rebecca Anglin
Director & Chair
Oconee County Board of Elections

Elections 2021 Highlights

January 5, 2021 – General Election Runoff – 77.40% turnout
March 16, 2021 – Special ESPLOST – 6.31% turnout
June 15, 2021 – City of Watkinsville SPECIAL - 18.28% turnout
November 2, 2021 – General Election – 10.66% turnout

Oconee County elections completed a yearlong project to digitally scan all voter registration records and continue to maintain clean voting records. The office also hosted Girl Scout Troop 12101 for an educational election tour, hosted a Region 5 Directors, Assistant Directors, and Election Staff Meeting, held a Voter Registration Drive and Absentee Application Drive at Presbyterian Village, and held a Poll Worker Appreciation Training and Dinner at the Oconee County Civic Center.



Water Resources

Awards:

- Gold Award for Collection System
- Gold Award for Distribution System
- Gold Award for Wastewater Plant

Accomplishments:

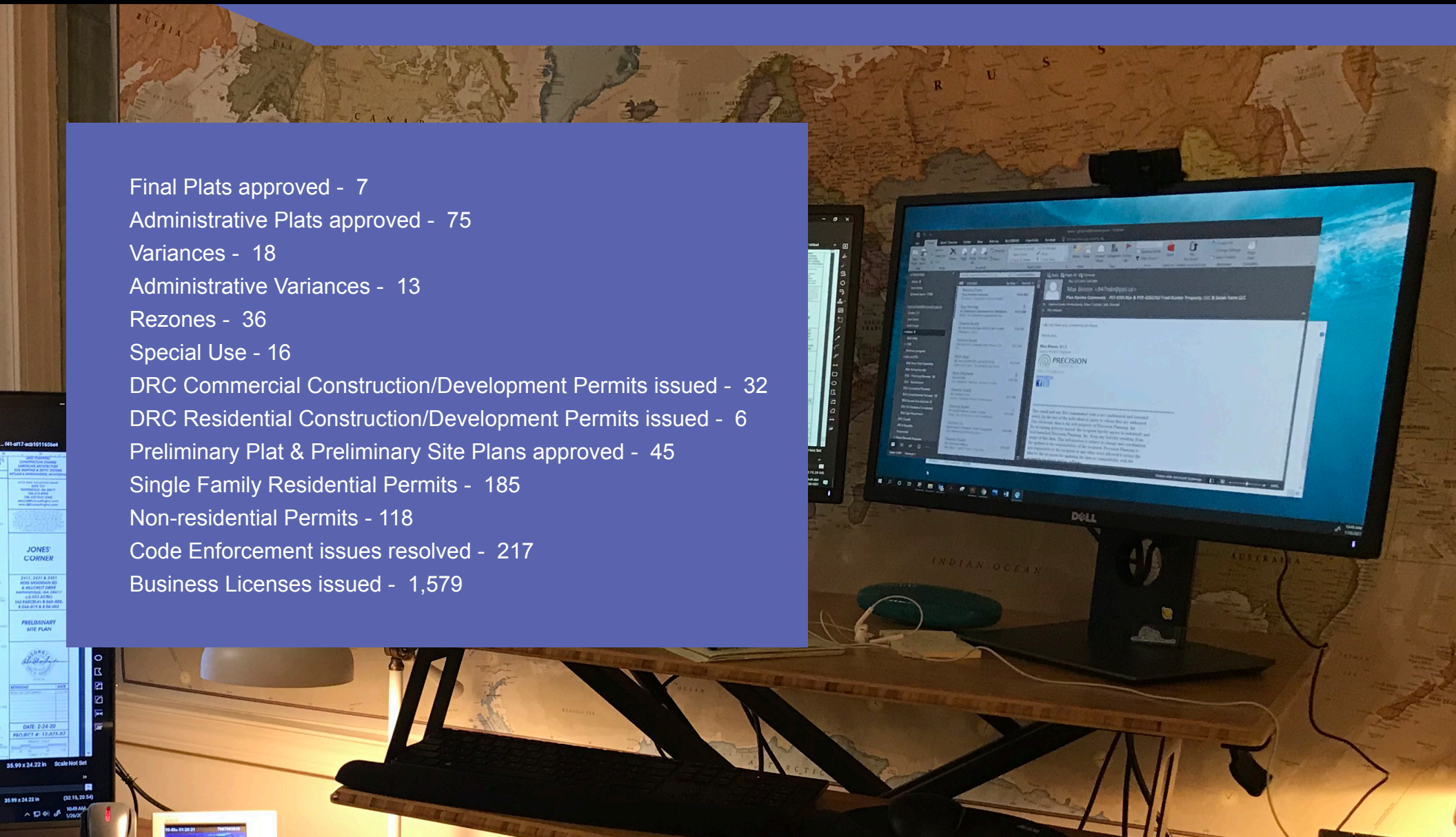
- Construction of new 750,000 gallon water tank completed
- Leak detection completed for 25% of system
- Fire hydrants tested annually and repaired as needed
- New vault/emergency interconnect with Walton County completed



OCOONEE
COUNTY

Planning & Code Enforcement

Final Plats approved - 7
Administrative Plats approved - 75
Variances - 18
Administrative Variances - 13
Rezones - 36
Special Use - 16
DRC Commercial Construction/Development Permits issued - 32
DRC Residential Construction/Development Permits issued - 6
Preliminary Plat & Preliminary Site Plans approved - 45
Single Family Residential Permits - 185
Non-residential Permits - 118
Code Enforcement issues resolved - 217
Business Licenses issued - 1,579



Keep Oconee County Beautiful



In 2021, The Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission (KOCBC) again received the Governor's Circle Award, presented by the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation, in recognition of KOCBC's outstanding and ongoing work to reduce litter, minimize waste, and beautify the community.

Activities included:

- Arbor Day tree giveaway
- Invasive Plant Removal Work Days at Heritage Park
- Bring One for the Chipper holiday tree recycling
- Dirty Dozen Road Cleanups
- Annual Great American Cleanup
- Annual Litter Index
- Drive-through Shred Day
- Hosted Keep Georgia Beautiful Regional Day Retreat

Keep Oconee County Beautiful



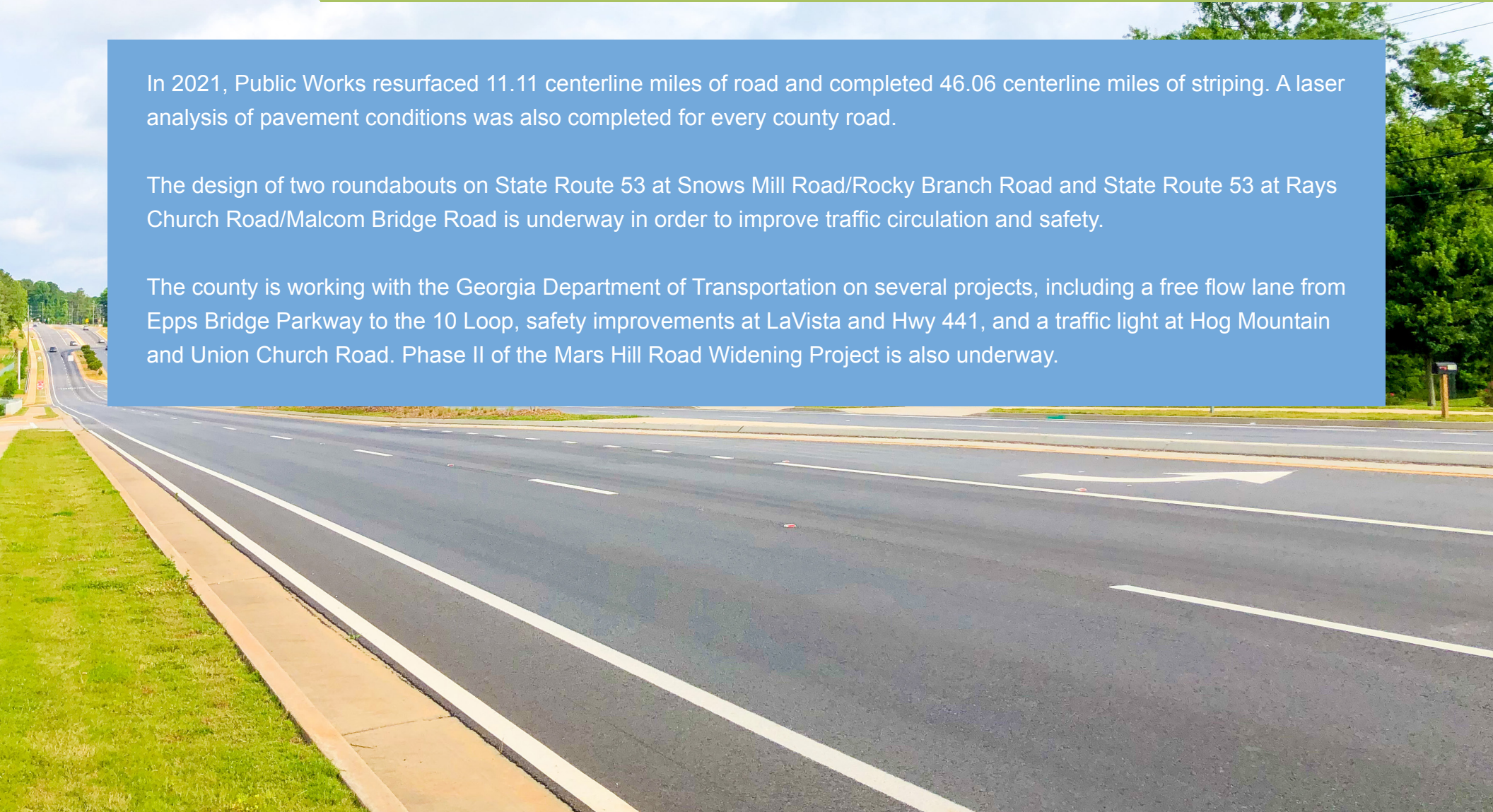
Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission
Public Works Department, Government Annex
1291 Greensboro Highway, Watkinsville
706-310-3560

Public Works/Transportation

In 2021, Public Works resurfaced 11.11 centerline miles of road and completed 46.06 centerline miles of striping. A laser analysis of pavement conditions was also completed for every county road.

The design of two roundabouts on State Route 53 at Snows Mill Road/Rocky Branch Road and State Route 53 at Rays Church Road/Malcom Bridge Road is underway in order to improve traffic circulation and safety.

The county is working with the Georgia Department of Transportation on several projects, including a free flow lane from Epps Bridge Parkway to the 10 Loop, safety improvements at LaVista and Hwy 441, and a traffic light at Hog Mountain and Union Church Road. Phase II of the Mars Hill Road Widening Project is also underway.



Sanitation

Oconee County adopted an updated Solid Waste Ordinance and streamlined the collection of hard-to-recycle materials at the Hwy 441 Center for increased efficiency.

The county also approved a new 10-year Regional Solid Waste Management Plan and made extensive improvements to sites, including new signage, resulting in a better experience for residents visiting the sites.

Recycling/Waste Center Locations:

- Greensboro Highway (SR15) - 2001 Greensboro Highway at Green Ferry Road
- Jimmy Daniell Road - Jimmy Daniell Road near SR316
- Hog Mountain Road (SR53) - Hog Mountain Road at Carrithers School Road
- Rankin Road - Across from Oconee County Middle School just off Mars Hill Road
- Hwy 441 - one mile south of Farmington on US441 (Macon Hwy)



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	706-542-7078	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