

Oconee County, Georgia

Annual Report 2022



Investing Responsibly in Our Future

Chairman's Letter



John Daniell
Chairman
jdaniell@oconee.ga.us

The year 2022 featured exciting generational projects that will benefit our entire community for years to come while maintaining our continued focus on fiscal responsibility.

Bringing high speed internet availability to every corner of our county is one of our most anticipated projects. Our partnership with Charter Spectrum to bring broadband to the more rural and underserved areas of our county broke ground in 2022 and will begin connecting underserved homes in 2023.

We broke ground for the Oconee County Administrative Building, which will create a one-stop shop for county government services. Once the move of county government offices is complete in the summer of 2023, the Oconee County Courthouse will serve as a dedicated judicial center.

In 2022, Oconee County made long-term investments in our water and sewer infrastructure. Calls Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility is under design to double its capacity in order to provide sewer service capacity to meet long-term demands in the county. The county's two partner drinking water reservoirs, Bear Creek and Hard Labor Creek, also began plans to expand Oconee County's water capacity and resiliency.

In response to high demand for parks and recreation facilities, Oconee County completed two new outdoor pickleball courts and two refurbished junior tennis courts. Paired with the three indoor courts at Herman C Michael Gym, Oconee County now offers the most available indoor pickleball court hours of all surrounding counties.

The voters of Oconee County approved a Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) in November – a gamechanger for our transportation maintenance that will accelerate completion of high-priority intersection improvements, allow for needed maintenance of county roads, and create a new network of walking and biking paths connecting residents to schools, parks, and neighborhoods.

Finally, Oconee County provides services for the citizens and is funded by its citizens. To that end, we are extremely proud to have approved a full rollback in 2022 of the millage rate and are looking forward to fulfilling our promise to roll the millage rate back an additional mil to offset the TSPLOST this upcoming year.

Sincerely,

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

Oconee County Government

Established February 25, 1875, Oconee is the 137th county created in the state, and its 186 square miles, located in Georgia's Piedmont region, are home to four municipalities: the City of Watkinsville, the City of Bogart, the Town of Bishop, and the Town of North High Shoals.

The county is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners, as provided by state law, which is vested with budget and taxing authority, authority to adopt county ordinances, and control of county property, roads, and facilities. A Chairman and four Commissioners are elected at-large for staggered terms of four years. The Chairman is a full-time elected official and the county's Chief Executive Officer who, in consultation with the Commissioners, appoints officers and staff as needed to administer the responsibilities of the Board.

The Board of Commissioners meets twice each month. Regular Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m., and Agenda Setting Meetings are held the Tuesday prior to each regular meeting at 6 p.m. The Board meets in the Commission Chambers, Room 224, 2nd floor, Oconee County Courthouse, 23 North Main Street, Watkinsville, GA 30677. Since its inception, Oconee County has been fueled by a strong community, rich agricultural lands, and an educated approach to economic development, which have helped make Oconee an outstanding place to call home!



Oconee County Government

Mission

To provide the highest quality services in a fiscally responsible manner to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of all Oconee County citizens.

Vision

An engaged community with world-class schools, thriving commercial sectors, vibrant town centers, high-quality residential housing and diverse amenities, and the preservation of our rural quality of life.



Strategic Goals

- Smart Government
- Smart Growth
- Smart Infrastructure
- Excellent Quality of Life

Address
23 North Main Street
P.O. Box 145
Watkinsville, GA 30677

Telephone
706-769-5120
Website
www.oconeecounty.com

County Budget Expenditures

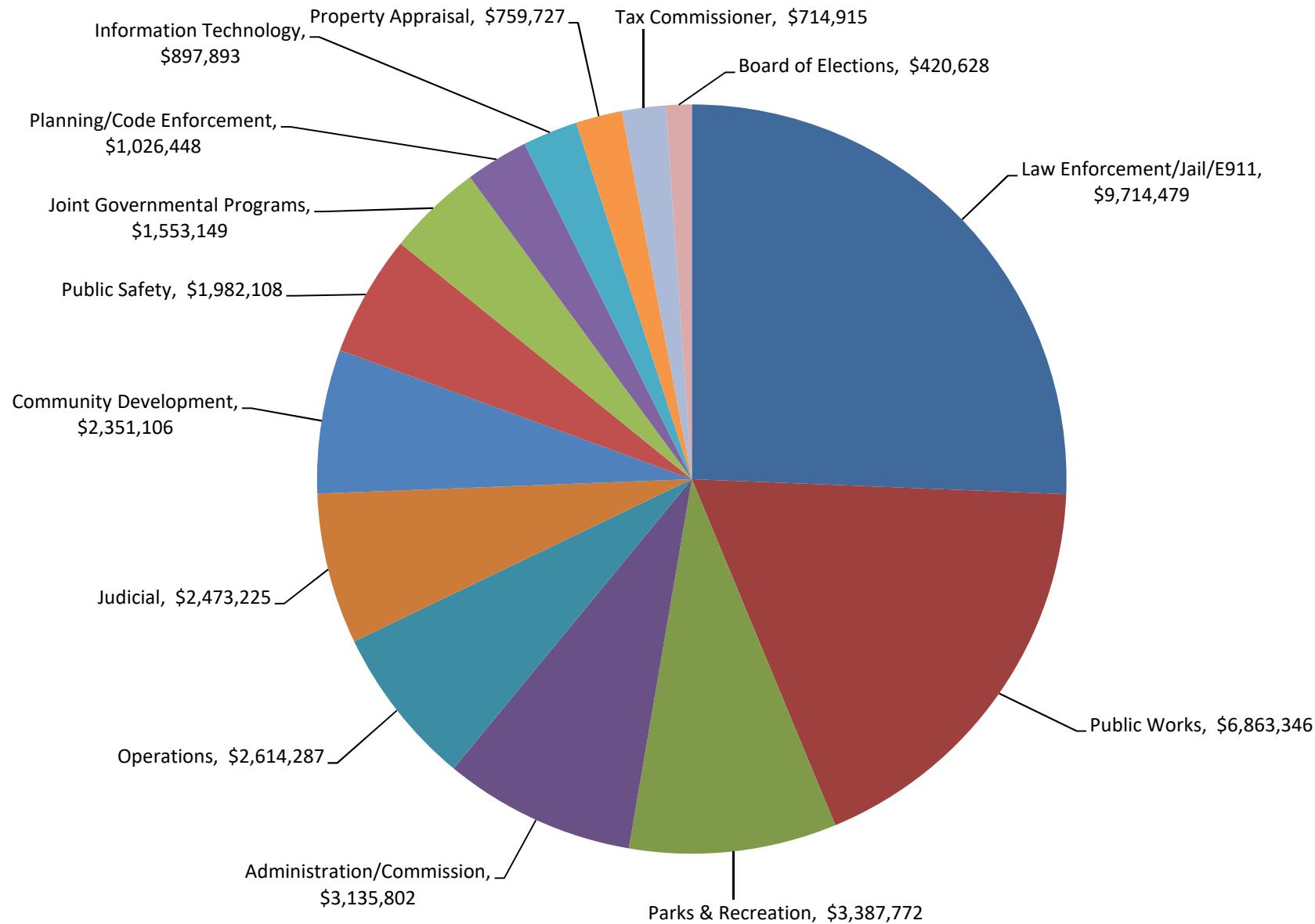
FY23 Budget General Fund Expenditures

Function	Amount
Law Enforcement/Jail/E911	\$ 9,714,479
Public Works	\$ 6,863,346
Parks & Recreation	\$ 3,387,772
Administration/Commission	\$ 3,135,802
Operations	\$ 2,614,287
Judicial	\$ 2,473,225
Community Development	\$ 2,351,106
Public Safety	\$ 1,982,108
Joint Governmental Programs	\$ 1,553,149
Planning/Code Enforcement	\$ 1,026,448
Information Technology	\$ 897,893
Property Appraisal	\$ 759,727
Tax Commissioner	\$ 714,915
Board of Elections	\$ 420,628
Total	\$ 37,894,885

*Budget as originally adopted July 1, 2022

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

FY23 Budget - General Fund Expenditures



County Budget Revenues

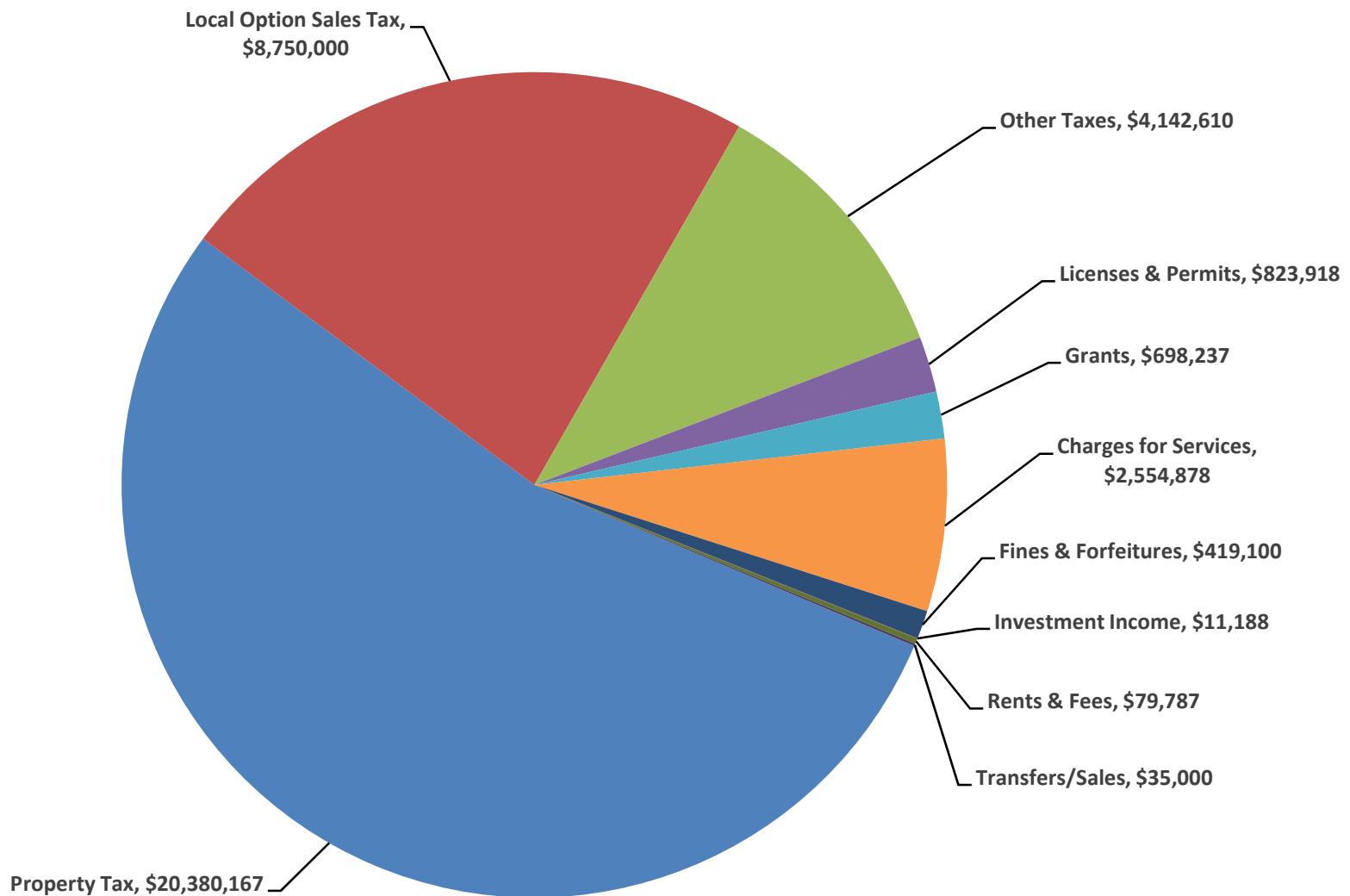
FY23 Budget General Fund Revenues

Function	Amount
Property Tax	\$ 20,380,167
Local Option Sales Tax	\$ 8,750,000
Other Taxes	\$ 4,142,610
Licenses & Permits	\$ 823,918
Grants	\$ 698,237
Charges for Services	\$ 2,554,878
Fines & Forfeitures	\$ 419,100
Investment Income	\$ 11,188
Rents & Fees	\$ 79,787
Transfers/Sales	\$ 35,000
Total	\$ 37,894,885

*Budget as originally adopted July 1, 2022

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

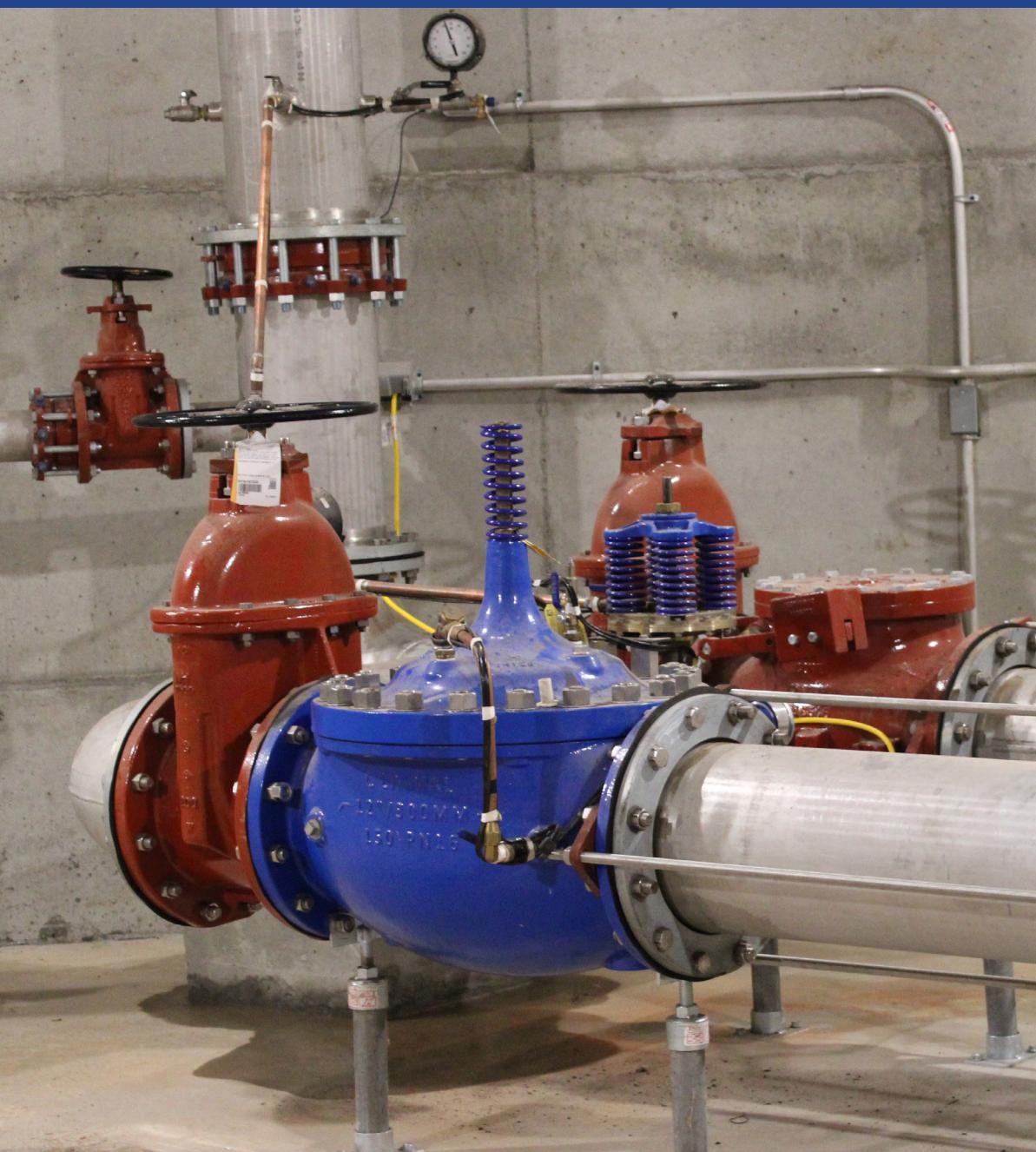
FY23 Budget General Fund Revenues



Water Resources



Water Resources



Awards

- Gold Award for Collection System
- Gold Award for Distribution System

Accomplishments

- Began construction for City of Watkinsville sewer line extension
- Calls Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility upgrade to 3.0 MGD under construction
- Daniels Bridge force main upgrade to 10" main under construction
- Awarded contract to develop sewer model
- Design is underway for Bear Creek Water Treatment Facility upgrade

Public Works/Transportation

- Resurfacing mileage - 17.47 miles
- Road Department work orders - 1,540
- Road striping – 35.07 miles
- Bridge repairs and maintenance - 37
- Crossover and driveway pipe repairs - 1,252
- Completed intersection design & improvement on Lane Creek Rd @ Cole Springs Rd
- Sidewalk replaced or repaired - 1,570 ft
- Catch basin replaced or repaired – 17
- Annual mowing completed in 2022 - 3 rounds of all county roads
- Roadside spraying in right of way - 2 rounds
- Updated radar permit and posted signs accordingly



Fire Rescue



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

Fire Rescue

New Recruit Firefighter 1 Training

Oconee Fire Rescue graduated six volunteers with a National Firefighter 1 Certification. The volunteer recruits completed 210 hours of fire training with over 150 hands-on practicals. The recruits also participated in Live Fire training to become experienced in extinguishing structure fires. OCFR's Firefighter 1 training certification is the same as most career fire departments.

New Recruit Medical Training

Oconee Fire Rescue graduated six volunteers with Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) medical training. The volunteer medical recruits completed 132 hours of medical training with practicals. The recruits also rode on National EMS ambulances to gain additional knowledge on assisting patients with medical emergencies. The volunteer EMR's reside over the entire county and can provide medical care prior to an ambulance arrival.

LUCAS Devices

Oconee County Fire Rescue acquired two LUCAS automated CPR devices this year. The LUCAS device provides automated and consistent chest compressions for the patient. It frees up the Medical Responder to provide other care such as monitoring airway and AED management. OCFR now has five LUCAS devices on Rescue Trucks strategically located in the county.

JAWS of Life

Oconee County Fire Rescue acquired three sets of Battery-Operated Jaws of Life this year. The Battery-Operated Jaws of Life equipment replaced older hydraulic powered extrication equipment. The new Battery-Operated Jaws of Life are more versatile and can be easily deployed to off-road incidents. OCFR now has five sets of Battery-Operated Jaws of Life at fire stations in the county.

Turnout Gear Washer

Oconee Fire Rescue acquired one Turnout Gear Washer this year. The Turnout Gear Washer provides commercial strength cleaning of Firefighter's turnout gear after fire suppression use. The washing of turnout gear also extracts possible carcinogenic materials absorbed on the gear from fire suppression. OCFR now has four Turnout Gear Washers at fire stations in the county.

Breathing Air Compressor

Oconee Fire Rescue acquired one Breathing Air Compressor system this year. The Breathing Air Compressor system allows Firefighters to refill their (SCBA) self-contained breathing apparatus air cylinders. SCBA's are used by Firefighters on structure fires, car fires, hazardous materials incidents, training drills, etc. OCFR now has three Breathing Air Compressor systems at fire stations in the county.

Parks & Recreation

Park Projects

- Park Plan updates and County Trail Plan initiated
- Herman C. Michael Junior Tennis Courts and Pickleball Courts constructed
- Oconee Veterans Park gym lights replaced with LED lighting
- Oconee Veterans Park and Herman C. Michael interior carpet replaced
- Heritage Park restroom flooring repaired and shop roof replaced

Georgia Recreation & Parks Association Awards

- GRPA District 7 Facilities and Grounds Professional of the Year – RaMad Hunter
- GRPA District 7 Programmer of the Year - Tyler Hartzog
- GRPA State and District 7 Volunteer Award - Oconee Parks Foundation

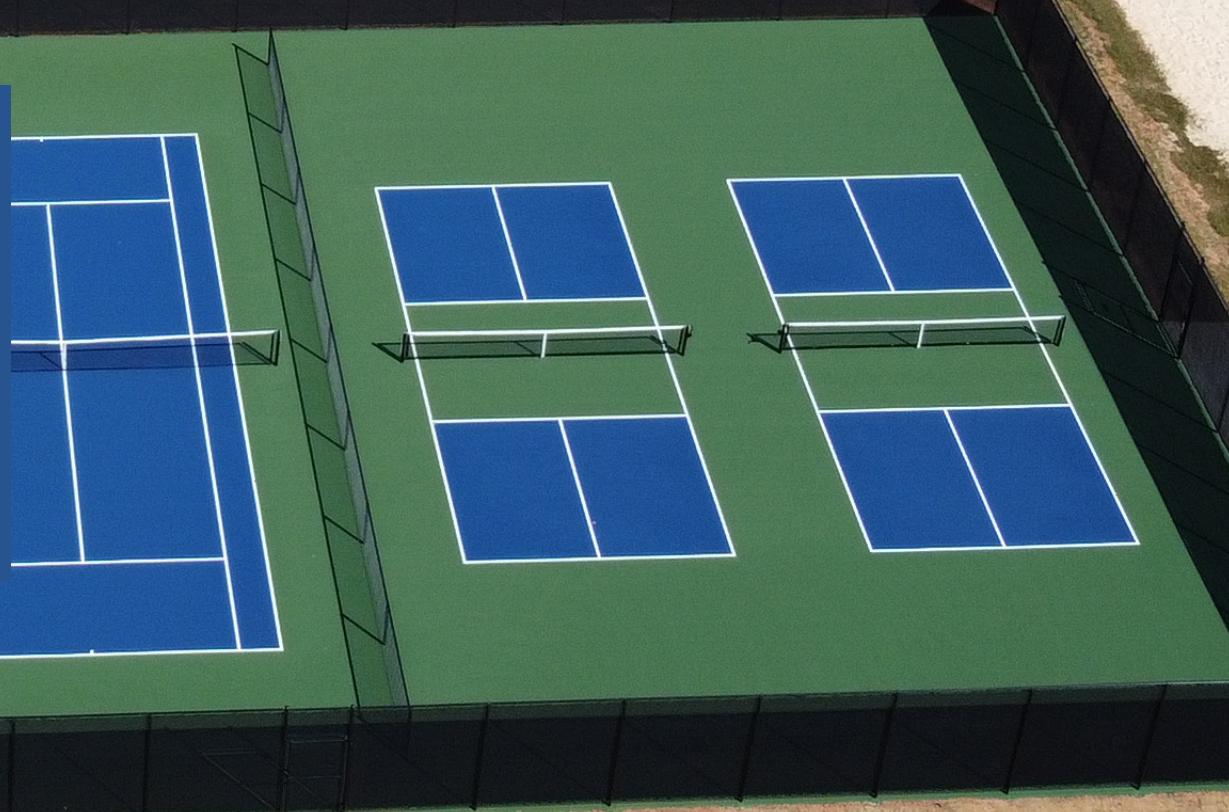
Park Locations

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



Parks & Rec by the Numbers

- 17,642 program and user group participants
- 18,814 volunteer hours given
- 30,918 open gym/fitness center check-ins
- 739 park reservations
- 629 park acres managed
- 40 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.

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.

Special Events

- Touch a Truck
- Youth Bike Rodeo
- Trick or Treat Trail

Partnerships

- Citizen-driven Oconee Parks Foundation received 501c3 status to support county recreation programs and park facilities
- Boy Scout project at OVP and Senior Center constructed swings along walking trail with repurposed pergola material
- Held 8 Volunteer Workdays at Heritage Park for Invasive Species Removal
- Hosted the Little League District Baseball Tournament

Senior Center



The Oconee County Senior Center hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, September 7, to celebrate the grand opening of the center's expansion, which includes a new health and wellness center and additional space for arts and recreational activities. The Oconee County Senior Center, located at 3500B Hog Mountain Road in Watkinsville, works to create opportunities for healthy aging through social engagement, physical activity and well-being, civic involvement, creativity, and life-long learning.

Senior Center

The Senior Center served over 17,290 meals to both congregate and home-delivered meal clients and logged 13,729 miles providing trips to and from the center for clients. A new transit service van was purchased to assist with meal deliveries and transportation needs, and Meals on Wheels Volunteers provided 1,914 hours of service collectively in 2022.



Keep Oconee County Beautiful



KOCBC 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
- Hosted Keep Georgia Beautiful Regional Day Retreat
- Month-long Battery and Tire Amnesty as well as Bulky Item Amnesty
- Spring and Fall Drive thru Shred Day
- Adopt a Mile with the Dirty Dozen Cleanups

In 2022, Sanitation continued site and signage improvements and also added upgrades/improvements to the county's two motor oil collection sites.

Keep Oconee County Beautiful



In 2022, 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. KOCBC was also recognized by Keep America Beautiful with the President's Circle Award.

Elections



Elections 2022 Highlights

- May 24, 2022- General Primary Election - 41.90% turnout
- June 21, 2022- General Primary Runoff - 21.71% turnout
- November 8, 2022- General Election - 74.68% turnout
- December 6, 2022- General Election Runoff - 66.11% turnout

2022 was a year of change for our Elections department. The year began with Redistricting, which resulted in a change of House districts for some precincts and House district numbers in all of Oconee County. Precincts were consolidated at the beginning of the year going from 10 to 8 precincts in the county.

Our new Director, Sharon Gregg joined our team in September. Her knowledge and experience in Elections is a huge asset to the office. Our county participated in a beta test program for Cellular poll pads during the November General Election, which cut down on processing time. Voters were checked in at Advance Voting in 45 seconds! We received many wonderful compliments on the Advance Voting process. One that really stood out was "It is like watching a well-orchestrated dance."

During the General Election Runoff, we broke daily turnout records with over 2,000 voters per day. Over 11,000 voters cast their vote in a 5-day period.

Jay Hanley was appointed as Chairman of the Board of Elections and Shami Jones was appointed as a board member on October 4th. They were sworn in on November 2nd. Kirk Shook was appointed by the Board of Elections as Vice-Chair and he and Ken Davis were reappointed for another four years.

Civic Center

With over 300 events this year, the Oconee County Civic Center played host to a wide variety of diverse events including:

- 141 School Events from live performances to band camp, education workshops, and student award ceremonies
- Early Voting for national and statewide Elections
- Town Hall Meetings
- 24 different performance groups
- Fund raisers, wedding receptions, award dinners, holiday celebrations, business dinners, training sessions, and an international conference



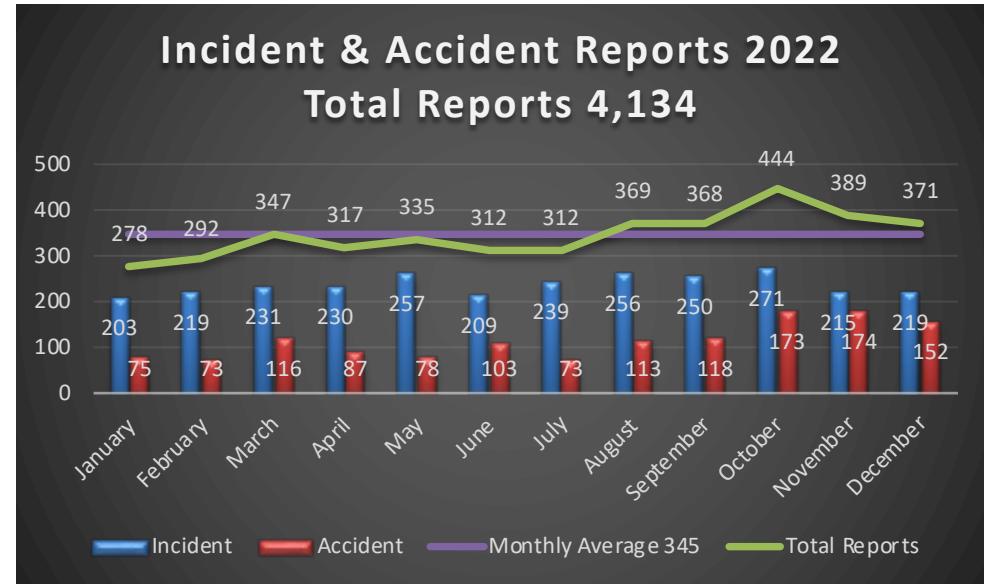
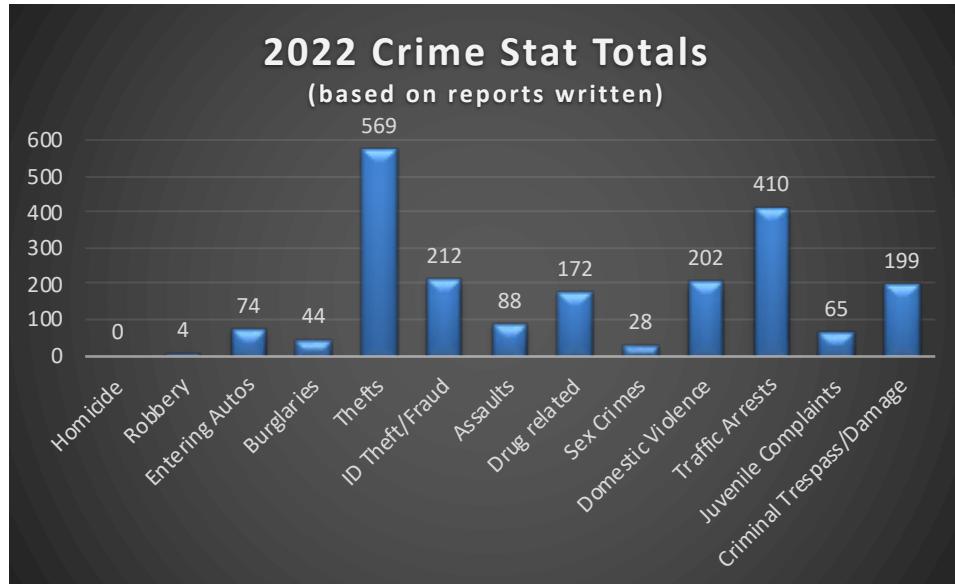
Sheriff



Sheriff James A. Hale Jr.

It is a great honor to serve the citizens of Oconee County. My Office's main priority is keeping this community safe for everyone. While the workload for the Sheriff's Office continues to increase due to growth in the population and business development in the county, our crime rate remains low. I attribute this to the hard work of the men and women of the Sheriff's Office. I am proud to say that my employees are dedicated to their jobs and strive to be the best in their fields.

Our jobs are made much easier by the outpouring of community support we receive. There is no doubt Oconee County is the greatest place to serve and protect.



Sheriff



In December 2022, the Sheriff's Office officially opened the newly renovated Patrol Division building. Known as the "Frank Norris" building, this structure is a historic building originally constructed in 1950 as part of a prison work camp. During the five-month project the building was completely renovated and modernized in order to more effectively serve the needs of the Sheriff's Office.

Libraries



2022 Library Stats

- The library circulated over 298,000 items
- Over 26,000 people participated in programs
- Patrons logged over 18,000 sessions of computer and internet usage
- Over 100 groups used library meeting rooms

Library Locations

Oconee County Library

1080 Experiment Station Road
Watkinsville
706-769-3950

Bogart Library

200 Burson Avenue
Bogart
706-310-3515

Libraries

New Library Services

- Sensory Backpack Kits
- Health and Wellness programming
- Board Games, Records and CDs for patrons to check out
- FanFest event at Oconee County Civic Center

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
- One on One technology help
- Seed Library
- Puzzle Collection
- Monthly take and make crafts
- 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, local businesses, and more!
- Active Library Friends group with twice annual book sale

Tourism & Visitors Bureau

The Tourism and Visitors Bureau, which manages the Welcome Center and the Eagle Tavern Museum, welcomed a new Executive Director, Sarah Cumuze, in September.

Last year over 2,300 visitors came to the Welcome Center and the Eagle Tavern Museum in addition to the visitors that spent time in our county for leisure and business travel. Tourism worked with many community partners such on a variety of events and programs throughout the county.

The Tourism and Visitors Bureau held its annual Colonial Christmas at the Eagle Tavern prior to the Christmas Parade. Tourism also offered pictures with Santa after the tree lighting ceremony and partnered with Athens Trolley Tours for their first annual Watkinsville Christmas Trolley Tours.

Guided tours continued to be a big activity for tourism in 2022 with over 20 Historic Downtown Walking Tours hosted and 129 individuals participating in the walking Haunted Ghost Tours.



Animal Services



Calls for Service: 710
Impounds - Cats: 530
Impounds - Dogs: 366
Adoptions: 441
Agency Transfers: 211
Return to Owner: 125

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

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 Crossing	706-431-0860	Post Office, Watkinsville	706-769-6980
Collection Site – Highway 15	706-431-0859	Probate Court Office	706-769-3936
Collection Site – Highway 53	706-431-0861	Probation Office – Providence	706-310-4466
Collection Site – Mars Hill Rd	706-431-0644	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		