

Oconee County, Georgia Annual Report 2024



Our Community, 150 Years Strong

Chairman's Letter



John Daniell
Chairman
jdaniell@oconee.ga.us

Oconee County is blessed with a strong and enduring spirit of community, which has helped our county continue to thrive regardless of what the passing years bring.

As we celebrate Oconee's 150th year in 2025, we can reflect back on recent achievements, including the expansion of the Calls Creek Water Reclamation Facility and the new availability of high-speed internet throughout the entire county.

We also look forward to starting work on our new projects, including construction of Dawson Park, which will provide another dedicated space where our community can come together.

I am proud to call Oconee County home and to serve the citizens of this county. As always, please feel free to reach out to me with your comments, questions, and concerns.

Sincerely,



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

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 at the Oconee County Administrative Building, located at 7635 Macon Highway, 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!

Photo: Watkinsville High School, Early 1900s

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.



Main Street, Watkinsville, undated photo

Strategic Goals

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

Address

Oconee County Administrative Building
7635 Macon Highway
Watkinsville, GA 30677

Telephone

706-769-5120

Website

www.OconeeCountyGA.gov

County Budget Expenditures

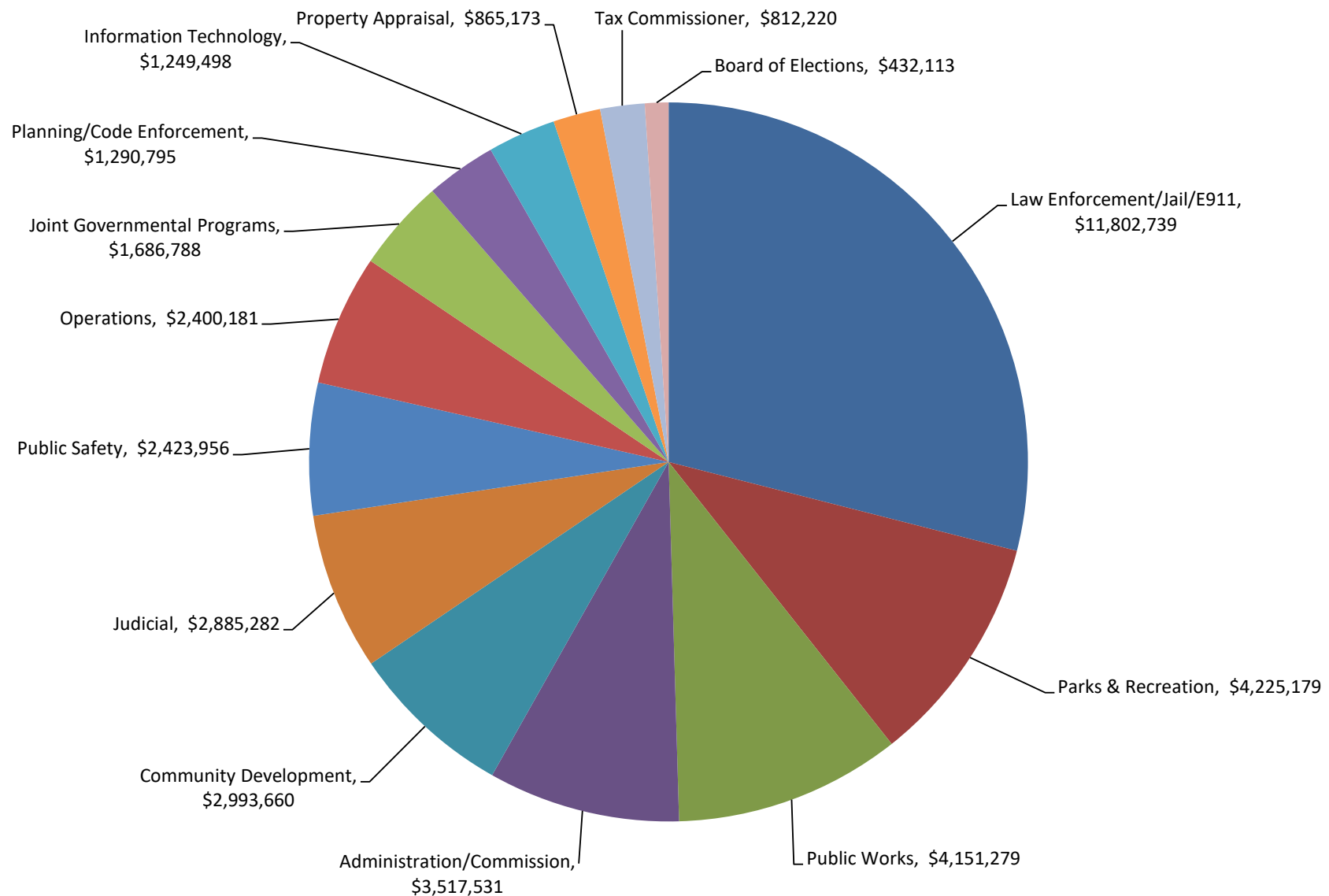
FY25 Budget General Fund Expenditures

Function	Amount
Law Enforcement/Jail/E911	\$ 11,802,739
Parks & Recreation	\$ 4,225,179
Public Works	\$ 4,151,279
Administration/Commission	\$ 3,517,531
Community Development	\$ 2,993,660
Judicial	\$ 2,885,282
Public Safety	\$ 2,423,956
Operations	\$ 2,400,181
Joint Governmental Programs	\$ 1,686,788
Planning/Code Enforcement	\$ 1,290,795
Information Technology	\$ 1,249,498
Property Appraisal	\$ 865,173
Tax Commissioner	\$ 812,220
Board of Elections	\$ 432,113
Total	\$ 40,736,394

*Budget as originally adopted July 1, 2024

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

FY25 Budget - General Fund Expenditures



County Budget Revenues

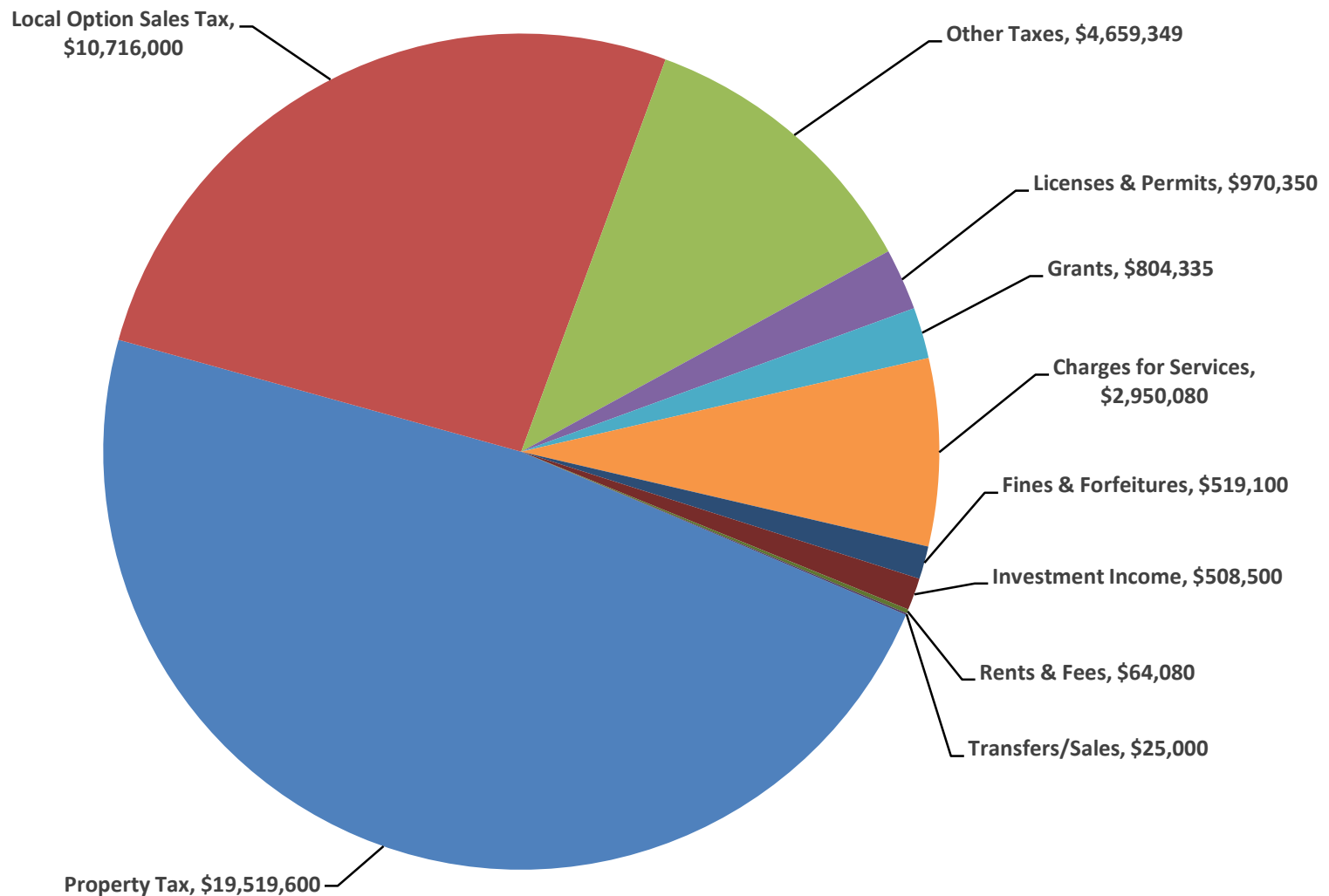
FY25 Budget General Fund Revenues

Function	Amount
Property Tax	\$ 19,519,600
Local Option Sales Tax	\$ 10,716,000
Other Taxes	\$ 4,659,349
Licenses & Permits	\$ 970,350
Grants	\$ 804,335
Charges for Services	\$ 2,950,080
Fines & Forfeitures	\$ 519,100
Investment Income	\$ 508,500
Rents & Fees	\$ 64,080
Transfers/Sales	\$ 25,000
Total	\$ 40,736,394

*Budget as originally adopted July 1, 2024

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

FY25 Budget General Fund Revenues



Water Resources



2024 Achievements

- 288 meter installations
- 297 service line repairs
- 338 lift station inspections
- 71 lift station repairs
- Calls Creek Water Reclamation Facility upgrade complete
- Water Service Line Inventory submitted in full compliance with EPD requirements
- Finalized sewer model

Planning & Code Enforcement

By the Numbers

- Final Plats – 17
- Administrative Plats – 74
- Variances – 25
- Rezones – 27
- Special Use – 9
- Commercial Development Permits – 30
- Residential Development Permits – 8
- Preliminary Plats – 22
- Preliminary Site Plans – 30
- Single Family Residential Building Permits – 212
- Non-residential Building Permits – 160
- Code Enforcement Issues – 256
- Occupation Tax Certificate – 1501



Public Works/Transportation

2024 Highlights

- 143 utility permits issued for work in the county's right-of-way
- Resurfaced 30.51 centerline miles of roads
- Restriped 20.52 centerline miles of roadways
- Cracksealed 17.28 lane miles of roadways
- Preliminary design & right-of-way acquisition for SR 53 & Snows Mill Rd/Rocky Branch Rd roundabout
- Colham Ferry Road shoulder widening
- New traffic signal at SR 53 and Union Church Road



Fire Rescue (OCFR)



New Recruit Medical Training

Oconee County Fire Rescue graduated five volunteers with Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) medical training, and the Sheriff's Office had one deputy complete the training. The volunteer medical recruits completed 116 hours of medical training with practicals and completed ride-alongs on National EMS ambulances. Volunteer EMR's reside across the county and can provide medical care prior to ambulance arrival.

Firefighter 1 Training

Oconee County Fire Rescue graduated four volunteers with a National Firefighter 1 Certification.

The volunteer recruits completed 246 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.

Locations:

Station 1 Watkinsville
7580 Macon Hwy, Watkinsville

Station 2 Farmington
2590 Old Farmington Rd, Watkinsville

Station 4 Dark Corner
7620 Hog Mountain Rd, Statham

Station 5 East Oconee
4931 Greensboro Hwy, Watkinsville

Station 6 High Shoals
200 Hillsboro Rd, Bishop

Station 7 Bogart
1931 McNutt Creek Rd, Bogart

Station 8
1600 Virgil Langford Rd, Watkinsville

Fire Rescue (OCFR)



Fire Safety Classes

Oconee County Fire Rescue provided Fire Safety skits to all K-3rd grade students in the Oconee County school system.

Fire Explorers

Oconee County Fire Explorers placed 1st & 3rd in Trauma Assessment at the Winterfest 2024 Firefighter Competition in Gatlinburg. Fire Explorers are 14 to 17-year-olds interested in fire rescue who attend bi-monthly fire and medical training. The program also serves as a recruiting tool for the department.

Thermal Imager Replacement

Fourteen new thermal imagers were purchased for all engines and ladder trucks. This technology allows firefighters to see in smoke filled environments, as well as see temperature variations in structure fires.

New LUCAS Device

Lucas automated CPR devices provide automated and consistent chest compressions for the patient, allowing medical responders to provide other care such as monitoring airway and AED management. OCFR added a new Lucas device and now has six devices on rescue trucks strategically located across the county.

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.

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.

Mission

Create impactful recreational experiences, promote wellness, and connect the community.

Partnerships

- Oconee Parks Foundation provided support for programs and special events
- Oconee Rotary Senior Center Pavilion built and Rotary Car Show held
- Held 7 Volunteer Workdays at Heritage Park for Invasive Species Removal
- Hosted Bat Festival at Heritage Park with KOCBC and UGA Extension
- Hosted the Little League All District Baseball Tournament
- Held the Warrior/Titan Classic Softball Tournament at Oconee Veterans Park
- Participated in the Georgia Trust Ramble event at Heritage Park
- Received ACCG Safety Grant and Atlanta Hawks youth basketball grant
- Participated in the Chamber Summerfest and the City of Watkinsville Christmas Parade

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Rec by the Numbers

- 19,558 program and user group participants
- 25,496 volunteer hours given
- 39,653 open gym/fitness center check-ins
- 781 park reservations
- 629 park acres managed
- 40 athletic fields/courts maintained

Park Projects

- Improved park tree canopy with 19 native trees planted between Oconee Veterans Park (OVP) and Herman C. Michael Park
- Both Bogart Sports Complex playgrounds replacement design plans developed
- Bogart Sports Complex quad had all 4 scoreboards replaced and poles repaired
- Herman C. Michael entrance landscape project completed
- Herman C. Michael Disc Golf course had 9 tee pads replaced with concrete pads
- Began construction documents for Heritage Park improvements, OVP tennis expansion and Dawson Park

Georgia Recreation & Parks Association Awards

- District 7 Volunteer of the Year – Adams Collins
- District 7 Volunteer of the Year – Jim Hanula

Special Events

- Touch a Truck
- Trick or Treat Trail

Parks & Recreation



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



By the Numbers

- 6,285 congregate meals served to 85 center members
- 9,028 meals delivered to 51 homebound community members (Meals on Wheels)
- 37,668 miles logged providing trips to and from the Senior Center for center members, including field trips
- 32 volunteers logged 1,525 hours delivering Meals on Wheels, teaching computer classes, teaching knitting and crochet classes, teaching yoga, and shelving books in the Senior Center library

New Programs

- Chair Yoga and Chair Zumba classes
- Beginner's Watercolor Art Class
- Intermediate Watercolor Workshop
- Beginner's Acrylic Painting Class
- New Bridge Group

Growth

New program offerings at the Senior Center have been instrumental in driving membership growth and in retaining current participants, and plans are in the works to add more in the coming year!

Keep Oconee County Beautiful



In 2024, 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, encourage recycling, and beautify the community. KOCBC was also recognized by Keep America Beautiful with the President's Circle Award.



Keep Oconee County Beautiful



KOCBC organized numerous environmental and community activities, including an Arbor Day tree giveaway, invasive plant removal at Heritage Park, and holiday tree recycling. The organization hosted road cleanups, the Annual Great American Cleanup, and the Choose Your Own Adventure Plogging/Trash Dash Challenge. Other initiatives included the Annual Litter Index, PopUp Plant Giveaways, the Great Georgia Pollinator Census, and Dawg Day of Service. KOCBC also promoted recycling efforts, such as Halloween candy wrapper collection and the TREX Plastic Film Challenge. Additional events included Third Grade Ag Day, amnesty programs for batteries, tires, and bulky items, Drive-Thru Shred Days, and Adopt-a-Mile cleanups.

Civic Center



The Ocone County Civic Center is dedicated to serving as a vibrant community hub, offering a versatile space to foster community engagement, support cultural enrichment, and provide a venue that meets the diverse needs of the community.

In 2024, the Civic Center hosted weddings, birthday and retirement celebrations, training seminars, and banquets. The Performing Arts Theatre provided opportunities to attend musicals, ballets, and plays in addition to multiple school choral and band concerts.



Animal Services



Oconee County Animal Services staff works hard every day to manage and protect the animal population in the county, enforce animal services ordinances, protect the health and welfare of citizens, and find homes for animals that need them.

By the Numbers:

Calls for service: 749

Intake cats: 472

Intake dogs: 325

Adoptions: 402

Agency Transfers: 205

Return to Owner: 69

Best friends are waiting for you at
Oconee County Animal Services!

Oconee County Animal Services

1171 Branch Road, Bishop

706-769-3956

Elections

In 2024, Elections staff focused on preparing for several elections, starting with the March Presidential Preference Primary. Site assessments were conducted at all polling locations to ensure sites met electrical and ADA requirements. Immediately following the March election, preparation for the May General Primary began.

Poll worker training was held prior to each election as is required by law. In addition, online training via Teachable was implemented and will be required for all poll workers going forward.

Adjustments were made at the new advance voting location, the Oconee County Administrative Building, to ensure smooth and seamless operation. The office also undertook the demanding task of verifying 4,259 signatures in July for an independent petition related to the district attorney race.

In the November General election, the county achieved the highest voter turnout percentage in the state, thanks to dedicated and knowledgeable staff and experienced poll workers.



<u>Election Date</u>	<u>Election Type</u>	<u>Turnout Percentage</u>	<u>Number of Voters Served</u>	<u>Poll Workers Trained</u>
03/12/24	Presidential Preference Primary	17.25%	5,258	54
05/21/24	General Primary and Special Election	24.13%	7,431	60
11/05/24	General Election	86.14%	27,665	64

Libraries



New Oconee County Library Grand Opening!

The library hosted a grand opening celebration in March 2024 for a new, larger, and more-up-to-date Oconee County Library at Wire Park.

This new location saw over 2,000 visitors on grand opening day!

The library offers a wide range of services and resources, including Wi-Fi hotspots, Chromebooks, and audio editing software. It hosts family literacy events, art exhibits, and hands-on activities for all ages. The library provides online resources like eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, and test prep tools, as well as museum passes, park passes, and birthday kits for checkout. Other offerings include book clubs, STEAM programming, one-on-one tech help, a seed library, a puzzle collection, and monthly take-and-make crafts. Additionally, it offers genealogy research, culinary literacy classes, ukulele and children's learning kits, free meeting spaces, a local author festival, and an active Friends group with biannual book sales.

2024 Library Stats

- The library circulated over 280,000 items in FY 23-24
- Over 40,000 people participated in library programs FY 23-24
- Patrons logged over 20,000 sessions of computer and internet usage
- Over a 120 groups used library meeting rooms

Library Locations

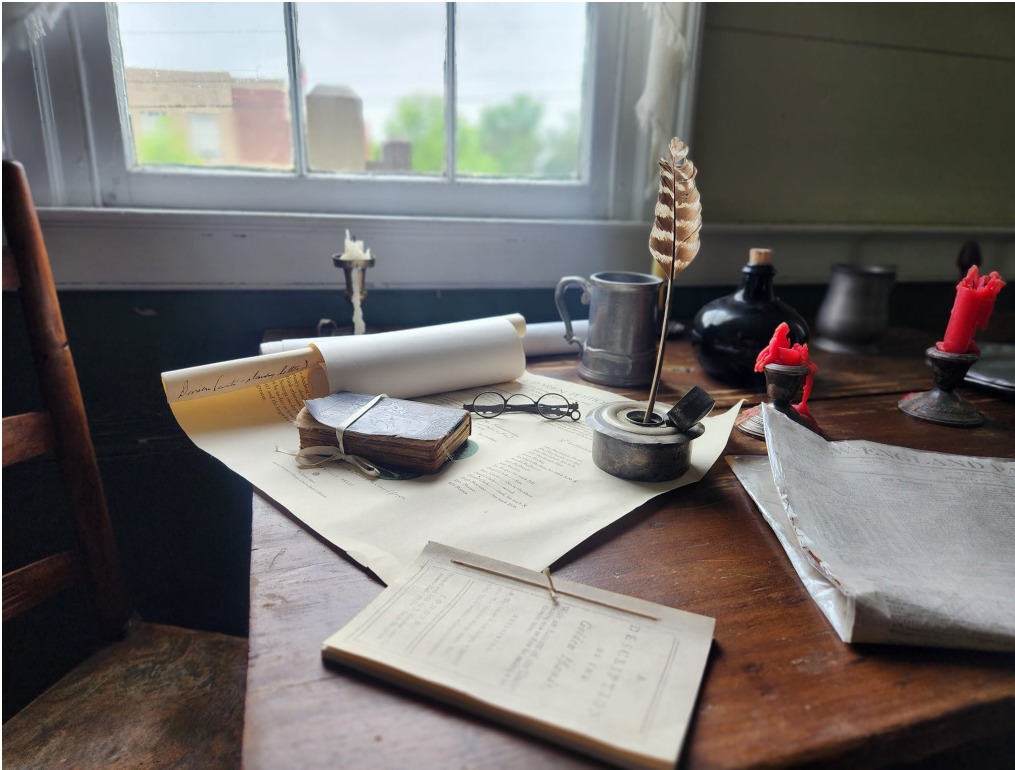
Oconee County Library

1925 Electric Avenue
Watkinsville
762-999-1577

Bogart Library

200 Burson Avenue
Bogart
706-310-3515

Tourism & Visitors Bureau



In 2024, Eagle Tavern hosted numerous community and educational events, including field trips for local schools and homeschool groups.

The Tourism & Visitors Bureau welcomed the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation's Spring Ramble and participated in local events, including the Chamber of Commerce Summerfest, and partnered with the Watkinsville Downtown Development Authority to host a BBQ Event and Bake Off at Rocket Field, drawing over 600 attendees.

Eagle Tavern also hosted a screening and panel on "The Hauntings of the Eagle Tavern" at the Oconee County Library's Fanfest.

Fall activities included ghost tours, a tour for the William Daniell Society Children of the American Revolution, and a painting session featuring the

historic William Daniell House.

The Tavern saw over 600 visitors during the Fall Festival and over 850 during Trick or Treat events. Additionally, it opened for the Christmas Parade and hosted "Photos with Santa" after the Watkinsville Tree Lighting.

Quick Contact List

Animal Services	706-769-3956	Fire Department	706-769-3975
Board of Commissioners	706-769-5120	Health Department	706-769-3983
Board of Elections & Registration	706-769-3958	Human Resources	706-769-3938
Chamber of Commerce	706-769-7947	Jail	706-769-3930
City Hall, Watkinsville	706-769-5161	KOCBC	706-310-3560
Civic Center	706-769-3902	Library, Watkinsville	762-999-1577
Clerk of Superior Court	706-769-3940	Library, Bogart	706-310-3515
Code Enforcement	706-769-3907	Magistrate Court	706-769-3940
Collection Site – Butler’s Crossing	706-431-0860	Parks & Recreation	706-769-3965
Collection Site – Highway 15	706-431-0859	Planning Department	706-769-3910
Collection Site – Highway 53	706-431-0861	Police, Watkinsville (Non-Emergency)	706-769-7891
Collection Site – Mars Hill Rd	706-431-0644	Probate Court Office	706-769-3936
Collection Site – Macon Highway	706-769-3915	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	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

Oconee County Board of Commissioners
7635 Macon Hwy, Watkinsville, GA 30677
706-769-5120