

Press Release

Each year, the Board of Tax Assessors is required to review the assessed value of taxable property in the county. In Decatur County real property is divided into three distinct classes – commercial / industrial, residential and farmland. Every year one of the classes of property is reassessed to determine current fair market values. When the trend of prices on properties that have recently sold in the county indicate there has been an increase in the fair market value of any specific class of property, the Board of Tax Assessors is required by State law to re-determine the value of such property and adjust the assessment. This is called a reassessment. Most of the property that was reassessed this current year was the commercial / industrial class of property.

If the value of a class of property is overall increased and the projected tax revenue from that property is calculated to increase, then Georgia law requires that a rollback millage rate must be computed. The rollback rate is the rate that would produce the same amount of total tax dollars to the County that was produced in the previous year from property taxes before the reassessment. The current tax year reflects an increase of a little over \$5,000,000 fair market value increase in industrial / commercial properties in Decatur County. However, to really complicate matters, the State of Georgia has provided a tax break for certain forest lands. Even though the County will experience a loss in tax revenue of approximately \$235,000 from the new Forest Land Protection Act property tax exemptions and other land conservation easements, the County must advertise that we are increasing taxes approximately \$18,000 from commercial / industrial class of property reassessments. Confusing? – the bottom line is that Decatur County will experience a net tax revenue loss of about \$217,000, but will still be required to advertise that there is a tax increase of .25% because of commercial and industrial reassessments.

The budget that will be adopted by the Decatur County Board of Commissioners requires that the County maintain the same millage rate that is currently in effect, 8.56 mills, and that the millage rate will not be rolled back even though the commercial / industrial class of property values have been increased.

Keeping the same millage rate as last year requires that the Decatur County Board of Commissioners holds three public hearings to allow the public an opportunity to express their opinions on the projected increase in tax revenue due to reassessments.

All concerned citizens are invited to the public hearings to be held at the County Administration Building, 203 West Broughton Street, Bainbridge, Georgia on July 23, 2009 at 9 a.m., July 23, 2009 at 6 p.m., and on July 30, 2009 at 9 a.m. At such time County officials will be present to discuss this complicated taxation issue.

