

OCCONEE COUNTY

2019 Annual Report



Heritage Park
Photo by Chris Greer

Together We Are Oconee

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

Our vision is 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.

You Make a Difference

We encourage you to get involved! Looking for ways to connect with our community? Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Attend a public meeting
- Participate in the library's summer reading program
- Deliver meals to seniors
- Coach a soccer team
- Lend a hand with a road cleanup
- Take part in a Senior Center event

You are also invited to apply to join one of our resident boards or committees! Open positions are listed on our website, and meetings are open to the public. Find a listing of boards and committees on the last page of this report.

Your active participation in government and community life is what makes Oconee County the perfect place to call home!

Did You Know?

Our courthouse expansion and security renovation project is complete, resulting in an additional 9,000 square feet and the addition of a sally port for more secure transport of individuals from the jail to the courts. Construction of the Oconee County Courthouse expansion was completed using funds from the 2004 SPLOST. The completion of this addition ensures that the courthouse will be able to meet the judicial needs of our county for years to come.

Consistent with our strategic goal of smart government, the county has implemented BS&A enterprise resource planning software, a state-of-the-art system to increase efficiency, while also providing additional financial transparency and interdepartmental integration.

Stay Up-to-Date with the Oconee County Website

The Oconee County website at www.oconeecounty.com is the perfect place to find out about events and news in county government. Visit us online when it's convenient for you from your computer, tablet, or phone.

- Use the Notify Me button to sign up for your choice of newsletters and alerts delivered to you via email or text - stay up-to-date with Board of Commissioners and committee meetings, new job postings, and departmental alerts
- Pay your bills online, including traffic citations, vehicle registrations, property taxes, and water bills
- Find Parks & Recreation programs and register and pay online
- Use the Report a Concern button to contact county personnel regarding potholes, broken water meters, erosion problems, animal complaints, littering, and other concerns
- View agendas and minutes for the Board of Commissioners and citizen advisory boards and committees
- Submit open records requests

On the Horizon

Oconee County continues to actively pursue access to high-speed internet for the entire county through partnerships with service providers. Watch for updates on this exciting project!

The county also has an eye on the future with these forward-looking projects:

- Purchase of land for new Oconee County Library and administrative building
- Animal Services building renovation project
- Application for Senior Center expansion grant
- Implementation of historical structures renovation projects
- Increased sewer capacity
- Discussion of future LAS Park

Stay in Touch

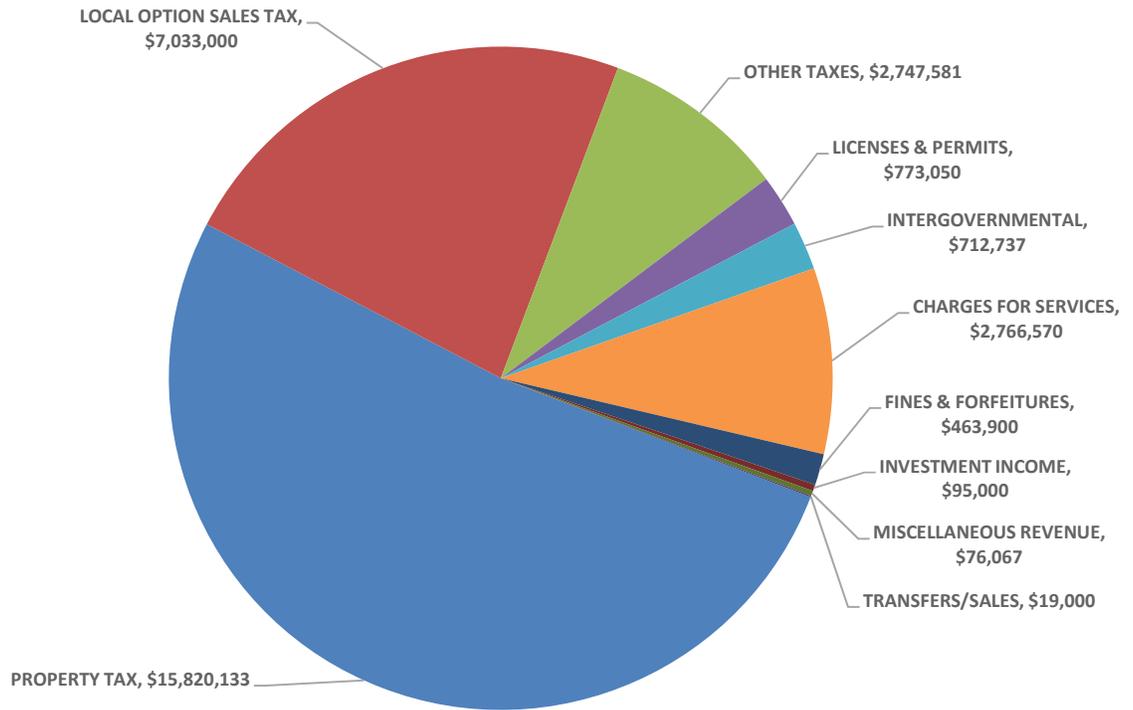
Official Oconee County Government Social Media Accounts

Stay connected with Oconee County Government on the go! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube!

- Facebook @OconeeConnects
- Twitter @OconeeConnects
- Instagram @oconeeconnects
- Youtube @Oconee County Government

Many individual departments have social media accounts, too! Visit oconeecounty.com/socialmedia for a full listing.

FY20 Budget General Fund Revenues



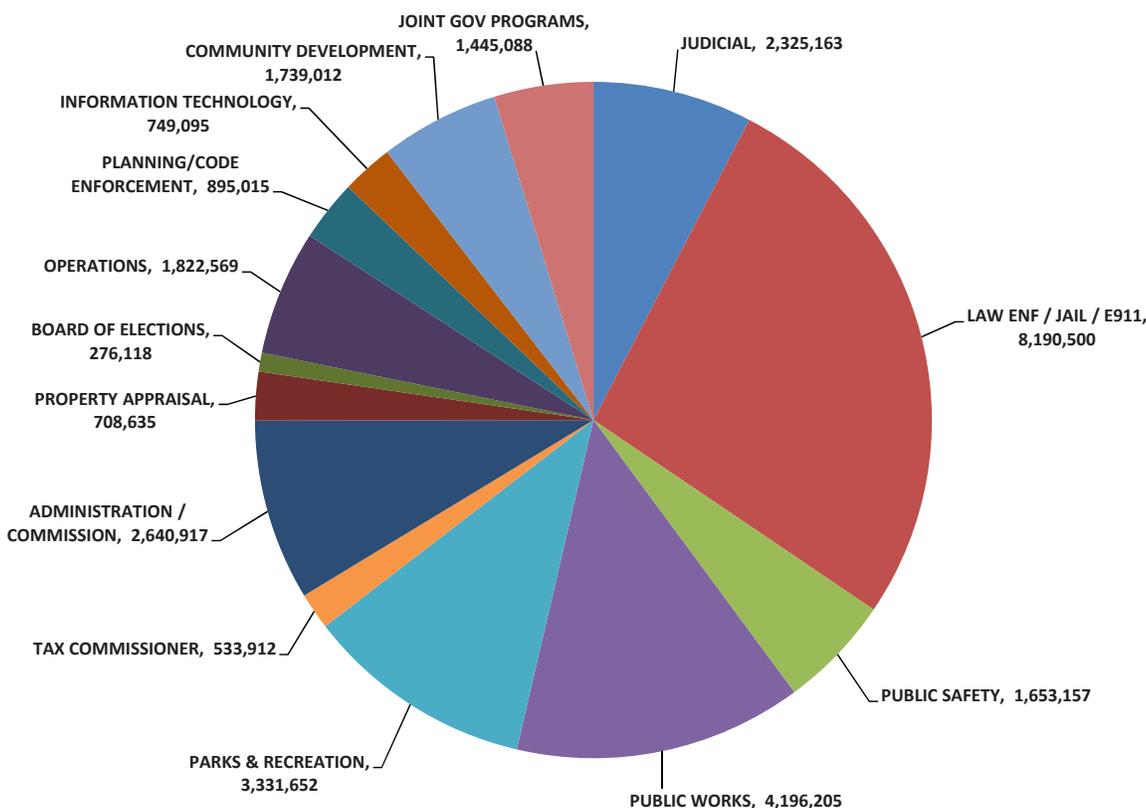
FY20 Budget General Fund Revenues

Function	Amount
Property Tax	\$ 15,820,133.00
Local Option Sales Tax	\$ 7,033,000.00
Other Taxes	\$ 2,747,581.00
Licenses & Permits	\$ 773,050.00
Intergovernmental	\$ 712,737.00
Charges for Services	\$ 2,766,570.00
Fines & Forfeitures	\$ 463,900.00
Investment Income	\$ 95,000.00
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 76,067.00
Transfers/Sales	\$ 19,000.00
Total	\$ 30,507,038.00

FY20 Budget General Fund Expenditures

Function	Amount
Law Enforcement/Jail/E911	\$ 8,190,500
Public Works	\$ 4,196,205
Parks & Recreation	\$ 3,331,652
Administration/Commission	\$ 2,640,917
Judicial	\$ 2,325,163
Operations	\$ 1,822,569
Community Development	\$ 1,739,012
Public Safety	\$ 1,653,157
Joint Governmental Programs	\$ 1,445,088
Planning/Code Enforcement	\$ 895,015
Information Technology	\$ 749,095
Property Appraisal	\$ 708,635
Tax Commissioner	\$ 533,912
Board of Elections	\$ 276,118
Total	\$ 30,507,038

FY20 Budget - General Fund Expenditures



Traffic Signal at Mars Hill/Rocky Branch/ Virgil Langford

The intersection improvement at Mars Hill Road/Rocky Branch Road/Virgil Langford Road is complete with the installation of right and left turn lanes at all approaches, improvement of the alignment of the intersection, and installation of a new traffic signal.

Road Maintenance By the Numbers

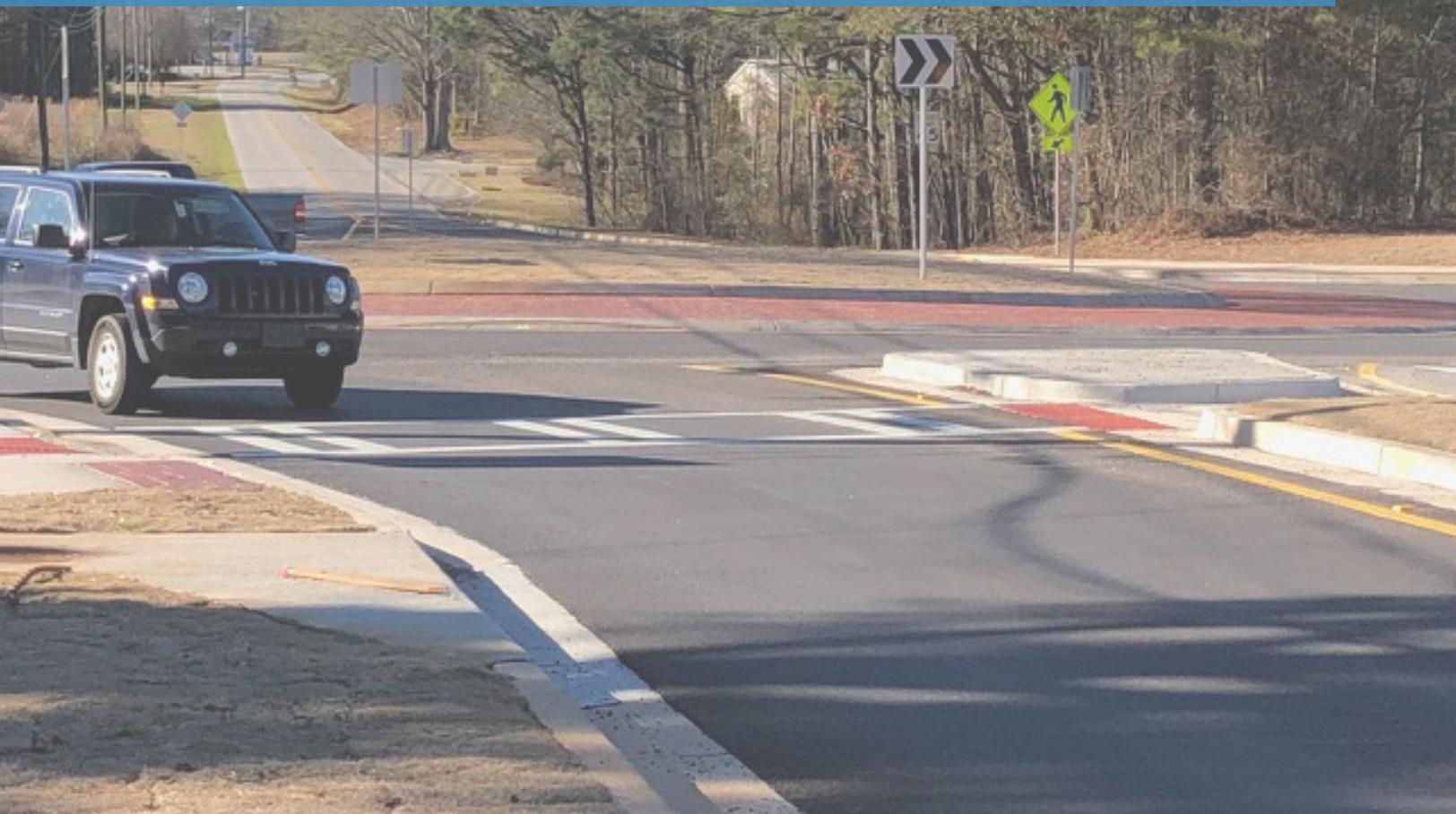
- 9.76 miles resurfaced in FY 2019
- 20.1 miles striped in FY 2019
- 11.17 miles crack sealed in calendar year 2019

Mars Hill/Malcom Bridge Roundabout

Oconee County's first roundabout at Mars Hill Road and Malcom Bridge Road opened in 2019. Roundabouts increase safety while keeping traffic flowing.

Roundabouts have a host of benefits according to the Federal Highway Administration, including:

- Improved safety
- More than 90% reduction in fatalities
- 76% reduction in injuries
- 35% reduction in all crashes
- Slower speeds are generally safer for pedestrians
- Reduce congestion
- Efficient during both peak hours and other times
- Typically less delay
- Reduce pollution and fuel use
- Fewer stops and hard accelerations, less time idling
- Quieter operation
- Functional and aesthetically pleasing





The Georgia Department of Community Affairs recently presented the Oconee County Planning and Code Enforcement Department with its **PlanFirst Community** designation in recognition of the county’s successful Comprehensive Plan implementation and ongoing commitment to outstanding community planning and development with significant public involvement.

PlanFirst applicants are evaluated in the following areas:

- Community and goals
- Community leadership
- Community participation in the development of a Comprehensive Plan
- Successful community implementation of the Comprehensive Plan



Oconee County’s Comprehensive Plan is the county’s guiding document for decisions about land use, development, community improvement, and investment. The Comprehensive Plan is updated every ten years based on input from the public, the Comprehensive Plan steering committee, and local government officials.

Planning & Code Enforcement also completed its Unified Development Code Update, and all staff completed customer service training to better serve our community.

Planning & Code Enforcement by the Numbers

- Final Plats approved - 7
- Administrative Plats approved - 71
- Variances - 12
- Administrative Variances - 5
- Rezones - 23
- Special Use - 5
- DRC Commercial Construction/ Development Permits issued - 21
- DRC Residential Construction/ Development Permits issued - 6
- Preliminary Plat & Preliminary Site Plans approved - 8
- Single Family Residential Permits - 236
- Non-residential Permits - 104
- Code Enforcement issues resolved – 100
- Business Licenses issued - 1,440



oconee
CHAMBER of COMMERCE
Connect • Engage • Inspire • Empower

Oconee County Government has partnered with the Oconee Chamber of Commerce for economic development services, resulting in reduced public spending and greater accountability. The Chamber of Commerce has a wealth of experience and expertise in the business community, which it can leverage to target industries that are a good fit for our community based on the county's vision and Comprehensive Plan. Oconee County is poised to attract numerous industries with our world-class schools, highly educated workforce, and outstanding quality of life.

A standing task force was created composed of stakeholder groups in economic development, including county, municipal, board of education, business, and citizen representatives.

The Economic Development Task Force has identified the following strategies to drive economic growth in our community:

- Support, nurture, and invest in existing businesses
- Target professional and technological jobs
- Leverage proximity to and relationships with UGA, as well as UGA's focus on research and innovation, to attract related businesses

Appropriate and thoughtful development and a thriving business sector will ensure that our community continues to prosper.

Economic Development Vision Statement: Grow the jobs of tomorrow by investing in our current businesses, creating an unmatched environment for professional and technological innovation, and through partnerships with the University of Georgia.

FIRE RESCUE

Did you know that Oconee County Fire Rescue medical responders answered 2,714 medical calls in 2019? Oconee County is fortunate to have a volunteer fire department that is trained to the highest level of professionalism and serves our community with unmatched dedication and selflessness. With an average fire call response time of 8 minutes, and an ISO rating of 4/4X for the county, our volunteer firefighters and medical responders provide the residents and businesses of our community with services valued in excess of \$6 million each year and the peace of mind that comes with knowing our lives and property are protected.

The Fire Rescue Department continues to grow and update its equipment and resources. The new Fire Station 8 on Virgil Langford Road is in service, and the department has been awarded grants to update turnout gear. A new fire engine has been purchased for Fire Station 5 and is currently being customized for delivery. The City of Watkinsville has also graciously donated a new fire engine for Station 1, which serves the Watkinsville area, and we are grateful for this spirit of intergovernmental cooperation!

Fire Call Response Time

Type of Call	Number of Calls	Average Response Time (minutes)
Structure Fires	16	7.75
Structure Fires - Out Upon Arrival	14	8.14
Structure Fires – Other Counties	2	N/A
Vehicle Fires and Farm Equipment	29	8.03
Vehicle Fires and Farm Equipment – Other Counties	2	N/A
Grass, Woods and Hay Fires	36	8.83
Alarm Activations	147	9.02
Smoke Scares	26	7.15
Control Burns	27	8.41
Haz-Mat and Power Line Calls	106	9.86
Haz-Mat and Power Line Calls – Other Counties	1	N/A
Automobile Accidents	226	6.57
Medical Assist	3	10.33
Non-Emergency Service Calls	55	N/A
Fire Calls Canceled Enroute	118	N/A
TOTAL CALLS	808	8.08



WATER RESOURCES

In 2019, the Georgia Association of Water Professionals awarded the Water Resources Department the Platinum Award for outstanding operation of its water system and the Silver Award for outstanding operation of its collection system.

Water Resources staff is hard at work ensuring that our water system continues to operate at a high standard:

- Replacement of water meters in Oconee County is nearly complete, and the new Neptune meters will ensure more accurate readings for both customers and Water Resources
- Smoke testing continues on a rolling basis to ensure the Oconee County collection system is operating to its full potential
- Fire hydrants are tested annually to ensure proper operation and flow, contributing to a better ISO score
- The department has implemented a more rigorous grease trap inspection program to ensure the integrity of the county's collection system
- All manholes and valves on the Oconee County Water and Sewer System have been located with GPS coordinates, allowing the Water Resource Department to immediately know where valves are during water main breaks and where manholes may be accessed quickly
- Plans are in place to build a new 750,000-gallon storage tank for the Watkinsville area to ensure adequate water pressure during times of high usage
- All four water tanks have been inspected and are in good condition



Each year, the Oconee County Welcome Center greets thousands of visitors who travel to our community to enjoy a variety of events, activities, and attractions.

Last year a total of 2,242 individuals from 28 states and 7 countries visited the Welcome Center and the Eagle Tavern Museum, in addition to the visitors that spent time in our county for weddings, sporting events, and business meetings.

In 2019, the Oconee County Tourism Department transitioned into a 501(c)6 and was officially named the Oconee County Tourism & Visitors Bureau. The Welcome Center completed a gorgeous renovation with the help of a \$5,000 grant from the Georgia Department of Economic Development. This renovation gave the Welcome Center the opportunity to utilize its small space in a way that provides a welcoming environment to visitors and locals, showcases Oconee's many attractions, activities, and artists and gives guests a central location to start their adventure.



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

Did you know that the Welcome Center is a regional visitor center for Georgia? Stop by to pick up visitor guides on cities and attractions across Georgia. One of the Welcome Center team members will be happy to assist and provide insider information on any destination.

For more information on all things Oconee, visit the Visitors Bureau website at www.visitoconee.com or follow the bureau on Facebook and Instagram @visitoconee.ga.

Visit
OCONEE COUNTY





Libraries are gateways to the world, and 2019 was a great year for ours! Our community is home to two outstanding facilities staffed by dedicated teams of library professionals ready to answer your research questions, recommend the perfect beach read, and lead a rocking baby music jam.

Drop in for children's story times, painting classes, knitting groups, or any of their outstanding young adult programs. You will be amazed at all our libraries have to offer.

The eagerly awaited Bogart Branch Library renovation was completed in 2019, adding 6,300 square feet, a welcoming community meeting room, and a dedicated creative space.



The Library Board approved the future move of the Oconee Library to the county's planned administrative building, which will allow the Oconee Library branch to expand and provide room for increased parking.

Oconee patron Megan Weatherford won the statewide PINES 20th anniversary library card contest. Her winning design will be featured on new library cards coming soon!

Libraries by the Numbers

- 223,814 visitors to the library
- 1,029 new cardholders
- 281,476 items checked out
- 48,462.5 hours read during summer reading
- 34,900 program attendance
- 98,038 reference questions answered
- 27,401 computer sessions
- 20,518 wifi sessions



Library Locations

Oconee County Library 1080 Experiment Station Road, Watkinsville
Bogart Library 200 Burson Avenue, Bogart

PARKS & RECREATION

The Oconee County Parks & Recreation Department (OCPRD) oversees four vibrant parks and a thriving program of activities for kids and adults!

OCPRD renewed its Better Sports for Kids Program Provider designation with the National Alliance for Youth Sports by demonstrating its commitment to providing a safe, high-quality youth sports environment.

Official pickleball courts have been added at Herman C. Michael Park and Oconee Veterans Park gyms, and pickleball lines will be added to two outdoor courts at Herman C. Michael Park this spring.

OCPRD has also completed the following projects:

- Repair of Oconee Veterans Park Community Building roof
- Bogart Sports Complex Renovation
- Central School House at Heritage Park repainted
- Dog Park fence improvement and benches added

OCPRD by the Numbers

- 8,500 plus program and user group participants
- 14,000 plus volunteer hours given
- 31,082 open gym/fitness center check-ins
- 1,065 park reservations
- 629 park acres managed
- 38 athletic fields/courts maintained
- 9 tournaments hosted

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



There is so much to experience at the Oconee County Senior Center! With a staff focused on positively impacting our community by creating opportunities for healthy aging through social engagement, physical activity and well-being, civic involvement, creativity, and lifelong learning, the Senior Center works to give all our members a sense of belonging, provide them with programs that contribute to their well-being, and help to keep them healthy, happy, and informed.

The Oconee County Senior Center offers a wide variety of daily activities:

- Exercise classes, including Senior Fit, Chair Zumba, and Line Dancing
- Games, including Bingo, Bridge, Canasta, Mahjong, Ping Pong, Pool, Rummikub, and Texas Hold'em Poker
- Educational programs, computer classes, and arts and crafts instruction
- Outings
- Holiday parties
- Music programs
- Health screenings

Oconee County Senior Center by the Numbers

- 19,022 meals served at the Senior Center or via home delivery
- 28,565 total attendance at programs and activities
- Transported members 27,327 miles to and from their homes for services



The Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission (KOCBC) received both the Keep Georgia Beautiful Governor's Circle Award and the Keep America Beautiful President's Award in 2019 for its ongoing commitment to reducing litter, increasing recycling rates, and beautifying the community. KOCBC will celebrate its 30th anniversary as a Keep America Beautiful (KAB) affiliate this summer with a reception on Sunday, August 9th, at the Oconee County Library. Stay tuned for more details!

In 2019, KOCBC also:

- Partnered with the newly formed Sheriff's Litter Patrol Division to address immediate litter issues and collect monthly data for tracking and reporting purposes
- Hosted Bring One for the Chipper at two locations with 500+ trees recycled for mulch, fish habitat, and ash for compost
- Held Dirty Dozen Road Cleanups on the second Saturday of each month
- Hosted its Annual Adopt a Mile Volunteer Celebration & Awards Ceremony
- Held the 21st Great American Cleanup Kickoff with 21 litter, recycling, and beautification events, in addition to annual March Madness litter cleanups
- Partnered with the University of North Georgia and Oconee County Parks and Recreation to complete tree surveys of all four county parks
- Completed Annual Keep America Beautiful County-wide Litter Index which showed an overall decline in litter, and used this data to direct programming
- Hosted a month-long Tire Amnesty event at all five Oconee County Collection Sites funded by an EPD Grant, resulting in 1,200 tires collected
- Selected and mentored 15 middle and high school students serving as KAB/KOCBC Youth Advisory Council members
- Hosted 2nd Annual KAB National Cleanup Day combined with KOCBC's first ever Bucket Litter Challenge
- Partnered with Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful to host Rivers Alive Cleanup Site on McNutt's Creek
- Worked in partnership with Parks and Recreation and Athens Land Trust to host an Invasive Plant Removal Workday series at Heritage Park as a result of resident input



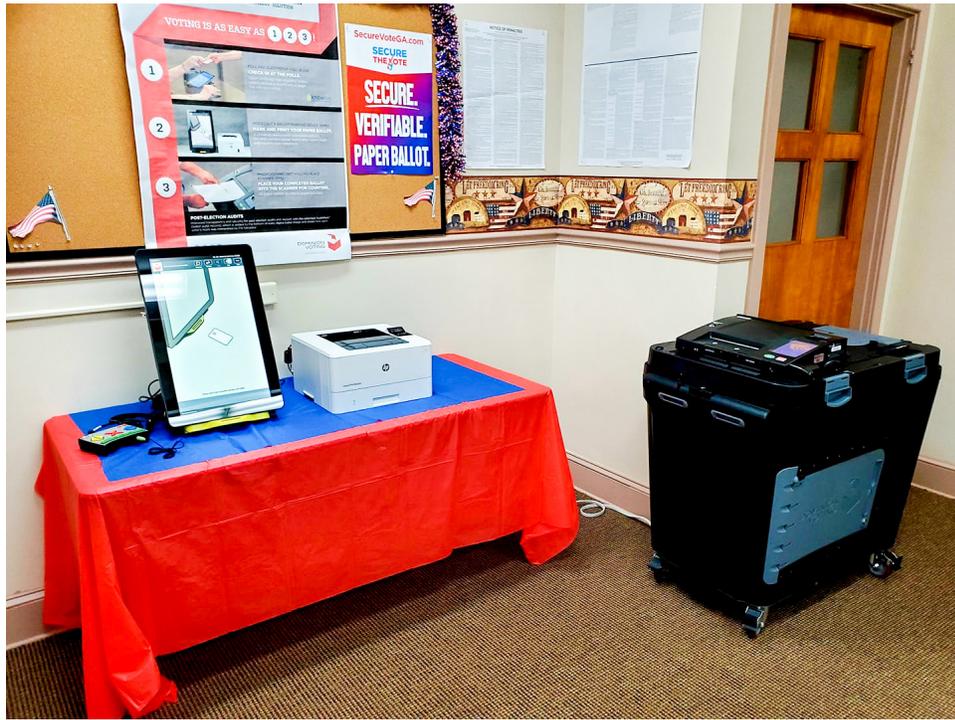


The Oconee County Extension Office provides a wide variety of services, including soil, water, plant, and home environment testing, agriculture information, family and consumer science education, and 4-H programs.

Oconee County 4-H assists youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society. In 2019, more than 900 youth were impacted by Oconee County 4-H development programs through hands-on learning focused on agricultural and environmental issues, agriculture awareness, leadership, communication skills, food and nutrition, health, and citizenship.

The Oconee County 4-H program boasts numerous accomplishments this past year, including:

- Ranked 3rd in the Northeast District for having the most active volunteer group
- Recognized by the State 4-H Leader as the #1 county in Camping and Project Achievement Public Speaking Contest participation for the state of Georgia
- Ranked #1 in the Northeast District for participation in DPA, State Council, State Congress, as well as the most Master 4-H'ers at State Congress
- Oconee 4-H alumni served in the 4-H camping program at three of the state's 4-H centers; three of the collegiate 4-H'ers were selected to serve in leadership positions at Rock Eagle and Burton 4-H Center, while two other Oconee alumni served in counselor positions at Wahsega and Rock Eagle
- Two Oconee high school students were selected to serve as STEM and Healthy Living Ambassadors for Georgia 4-H
- National recognition for 5th Place Senior Life Smarts Team
- State Titles: Junior Dairy Quiz Bowl, Junior Life Smarts Team, Forestry Judging High Individual
- State Runner Up: Forestry Judging, Land Judging, Life Smarts, Dairy Quiz Bowl
- Over 133 youth participated in 4-H Officer Training
- Two high school 4-H'ers served on the Northeast District Senior Board of Directors and three middle school students were elected to serve on the Northeast District Junior Board of Directors



The Board of Elections & Registration staff is gearing up for the coming elections in 2020 with new voting equipment. This new equipment will print a paper ballot voters can check to confirm their choices before casting their ballot. These paper ballots will provide an audit trail for all elections. For more information about the new system, visit securevotega.com.

During this busy election year, staff will train election poll workers, serve early voters, and mail absentee ballots, in addition to their tireless work on election days.

As of the end of 2019, Oconee County had 30,034 registered voters.



Check out all the ways you can get involved and serve your community on our Resident Boards and Committees! Openings occur throughout the year and are posted on our website and the county's Facebook page. With so many choices, you are sure to find a board that speaks to issues that matter to you! All meetings are open to the public. For complete details, visit oconeecounty.com/boards.

- Oconee County Animal Services Board
- Oconee County Board of Elections & Registration
- Oconee County Board of Health
- Oconee County Board of Tax Assessors
- Oconee County Family and Children Services Board
- Oconee County Farmland Preservation Committee
- Hard Labor Creek Reservoir Management Board
- Oconee County Industrial Development Authority
- Keep Oconee County Beautiful Commission
- Oconee County Library Advisory Board
- Oconee River Resource, Conservation and Development Council
- Oconee County Planning Commission
- Recreation Advisory Committee
- Tourism & Visitors Bureau
- Transportation Task Force
- Community Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases Community Service Board
- Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases Community Service Board, Region 2



Oconee County
Board of Commissioners

23 N. Main Street
P.O. Box 145
Watkinsville, GA 30677
706-769-5120



John Daniell
Chairman
jdaniell@oconee.ga.us



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



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



W.E. "Bubber" Wilkes
Commissioner, Post 3
bwilkes@oconee.ga.us



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

Quick Contact List

ACTS	770-725-2330
Adult Literacy	706-552-0968
Animal Services	706-769-3956
Board of Commissioners	706-769-5120
Board of Elections & Registration	706-769-3958
Chamber of Commerce	706-769-7947
City Hall, Watkinsville	706-769-5161
Civic Center	706-769-3902
Clerk of Superior Court	706-769-3940
Code Enforcement	706-769-3907
Collection Site – Butler's Cross.	706-769-2916
Collection Site – Highway 15	706-769-3923
Collection Site – Highway 53	770-725-2421
Collection Site – Mars Hill Rd	706-353-3660
Communications	706-310-3556
Coroner's Office	706-769-2988
County Extension/4H	706-769-3946
DFCS	706-310-2260
District Attorney	706-769-3954
Eagle Tavern Museum	706-769-8730
EMA	706-310-3600
Environmental Health	706-769-7060
Family Connection	706-769-4974
Finance & Procurement	706-769-2944
Fire Department	706-769-3975
Health Department	706-769-3983
Human Resources	706-769-3938
Jail	706-769-3930
KOCBC	706-310-3560
Landfill – Macon Highway	706-769-3915
Library, Watkinsville	706-769-3950
Library, Bogart	770-725-9443
Magistrate Court	706-769-3940
Parks & Recreation - HCM	706-769-3965
Parks & Recreation - OVP	706-769-3965
Planning Department	706-769-3910
Police, Watkinsville – Non Emer.	706-769-7891
Post Office, Watkinsville	706-769-6980
Probate Court Office	706-769-3936
Probation Office – Providence	706-310-4466
Property Appraisal Office	706-769-3921
Public Works Department	706-769-2937
Road Department	706-769-3912
Sanitation (Public Works)	706-769-2937
Senior Center	706-769-3979
Sheriff (Non Emergency)	706-769-5665
Sheriff (Administration)	706-769-3945
Stormwater Mgt. (Public Works)	706-769-2937
Tax Commissioner	706-769-3917
USDA, FSA, NRCS	706-769-3990
Water Resources	706-769-3960
Welcome Center	706-769-5197