

Volusia County Government 2009-'10 Approved Budget
Frequently asked questions

In its second of two budget hearings Thursday, Sept. 17, the Volusia County Council approved a tax rate of 5.37 mill, representing \$5.37 per \$1,000 of taxable value.

Q.What are the dates of the county's upcoming fiscal year?

A. Oct. 1, 2009 - Sept. 30, 2010

Q. How much is the approved Volusia County Government general fund, from property taxes, for the 2009-10 fiscal year?

A. \$156 million

Q.What is the tax rate?

A. The general fund tax rate is \$5.37 per \$1,000 of taxable property value. This is less than the rolled-back rate.

Q.Will the county receive more revenue next year than it received in the current year?

A. No. Volusia County will receive \$2 million less than last fiscal year.

Q.How many tax rates are levied for Volusia countywide, and what's that total tax rate?

A. Together the five tax rates levied countywide total \$6.37 per \$1,000 of taxable property value. The five tax rates are the general fund, library fund, ECHO fund, forever operating fund and the forever debt service fund.

Q.How much has the tax base fallen in the past year in Volusia County?

A. 17 percent

Q. Does the current budget reflect an increase in spending?

A. No. According to County Manager James Dinneen, the county began downsizing three years ago and that will continue in the next budget year.

Q. Are reductions included in the budget?

A. Yes. In the budget, personal services will be reduced \$7 million, operating expenditures will be reduced \$7 million, and capital outlay will be reduced \$5 million. In total, the operating budget is \$19 million lower than the current year's overall adopted budget.

Q. How much has the county staff size changed over the past three years?

A. The county has reduced the organization by 72 full-time and 91 part-time positions. Further, County Manager James Dinneen has placed 28 positions in transition funding to be deleted over time, and has left another 75 positions unfunded for fiscal year 2009-10.

Q. How much money has been saved through staff reductions over the past three years?

A. The elimination of positions has saved \$4.8 million. Unfunded positions have saved \$3.2 million.

Q. How does the budgeted general fund property tax compare to the state benchmark?

A. Since FY 2006-07, the county's property tax percent increases have been lower than the state's adopted growth standard (PCI plus growth).

Q. What comprises most of the county's core general fund services?

A. The county's core services include sheriff, jail, beach, emergency operations, and judicial system. These core services account for 72 percent of the budget. Other government services account for 28 percent.

Q. How is the county accounting for increased costs of goods and services due to inflation?

A. County Manager Dinneen said, "Volusia County is absorbing normal cost increases through prudent planning, sound management and the organization working as a team. Our government's documented cost index is a growth in operations of about 7 percent annually." Being fiscally responsible for the past four years has resulted in the organization becoming more efficient.

Q. How has demand for county services been affected by the economic downturn?

A. Citizen demand for county services has increased and a considerably higher number of people are seeking social services. Significant increases in parks, libraries and beach services also have been seen throughout the county as citizens seek cost-effective activities close to home.

Q. What program/department budgets will be decreased in the approved budget?

A. All county departments are participating in cost-cutting measures. One of the major changes is in the Fire Services Department. The budget reflects a \$1.5 million reduction in the county's fire budget. The reduction is largely the result of savings achieved through a new fire response model that requires fewer personnel. The model is based on a two-person minimum staffing of the stations with additional manpower provided by regional hub stations, as needed.

Q. Are there any expanded programs or capital projects in the general fund budget?

A. The major capital project in the budget is \$7 million to address jail overcrowding and aging facilities. No other capital projects are in the budget. The County Council will discuss the jail options in fall 2009.

Q. What part of my tax bill is the county responsible for?

A. There are 23 taxing districts in Volusia County they range from schools, hospitals, water management districts, and cities all determined by the location you live. Volusia County Government is only responsible functions that fall within our jurisdiction.

Q. How much has the county potentially saved the taxpayers by using the state benchmark and keeping the general fund at the rolled-back rate or below for the past three fiscal years?

A. \$96 million