



Charleston County News Release

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Administrator Proposes Another Year of Tax Cuts for Charleston County Residents

2014 Budget Highlights

- *Tax Decrease On Owner-occupied Homes*
- *Triple AAA Bond Ratings Maintained*
- *Consolidated Dispatch Transition Continues*
- *Services to Veterans Increased*
- *Mosquito Control Strengthened*
- *Maintenance and Replacement Schedule Resumed for all County Assets*

Anyone living in Charleston County can look forward to paying a few less tax dollars next year. Specifically, if [Charleston County Administrator Kurt Taylor](#)'s proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 budget passes, residents will see a six percent reduction in taxes on owner-occupied homes, equating to about \$4.80 on a \$100,000 home.

The proposed FY 2014 budget (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014) will be presented to [Charleston County Council](#) during a special finance committee meeting at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21. It is the second [Charleston County Government](#) budget in a row that includes a net tax decrease for homeowners.

"The FY 2014 Charleston County Proposed Operating Budget meets the County's budget objectives and addresses major policy issues," Taylor said. "As we enter a new fiscal year and plan carefully for future years, staff will continue to strive to efficiently and effectively follow the goals and directives set by County Council and to meet the needs of our citizens. Each Councilmember has a detailed copy of the budget and I look forward to hearing their comments on Tuesday."

Explanation on the decrease in taxes:

- The proposed budget includes an 8/10 mill increase. The increase is more than offset by the Local Option Sales Tax credit, resulting in an overall decrease in taxes.
- Definitions:
 - **Millage Rate:** the ratio used to determine the individual tax to be levied on a property. A mill is equivalent to 1/1000 of a dollar. For example, if the millage rate is 200 mills and the assessed value of a property is \$1,000, the tax on that property is \$200.
 - **Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) Credit:** according to the [S.C. Department of Revenue](#), "this tax is a general sales and use tax on all sales at retail (with a few exceptions) taxable under the state sales and use tax. This tax is imposed to

reduce the property tax burden on persons in the counties that impose this type of local tax and is collected by the Department of Revenue on behalf of these counties.”

- Each year, Charleston County budgets for the estimated sales tax collections, aiming to credit 100 percent of the LOST revenues as credit against local property taxes.
- See chart showing how taxes have decreased recently on an owner-occupied home in Charleston County: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/BudgetChart2014.pdf>

Other important details in the proposed budget include:

- **General Fund of \$194 million**
 - Up \$6.9 million (3.7%) from last year mostly due to added employees in the Consolidated 9-1-1 Dispatch Center and Public Works Mosquito Control Division
 - Operating costs up \$2.4 million due to facility and technology costs related to finishing Consolidated Dispatch, as well as vehicle/heavy equipment maintenance costs.
 - Capital and one-time expenditures down \$1.3 million from last year due to fewer vehicle/equipment replacements and fewer information technology upgrades.
- **Maintaining elite AAA bond ratings**
 - In FY 2013, the County’s good rating enabled it to borrow money at an interest rate of only 1.25%. Doing so resulted in a savings of \$10.5 million (a lower rate than 2,900 other counties in the U.S.).
 - Maintaining the strong AAA bond rating with Fitch, Moody’s, and Standard and Poor’s is an excellent gauge of the County’s financial health going into FY 2014.
 - The proposed budget follows the County’s financial policies, which include maintaining the Rainy Day funds, maintaining fund balance levels, and performing five-year financial forecasts for the County’s major funds.
- **Consolidated 9-1-1 Dispatch and Safety**
 - Improved public safety
 - [Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center](#)
 - The FY 2014 budget includes additional funding for the final transitional phase of the Consolidated Dispatch Center slated for completion in January 2014.
 - With the completion, Charleston County citizens can expect quicker, more accurate response to their emergency calls.
 - The FY 2014 budget will replace 70 public safety vehicles with new ones, and five new ambulances will be replacing out-dated models.
 - Possible municipal tax decreases in the future
 - The County is absorbing 103 positions from municipalities (the final 19 positions are in the FY 2014 budget).
 - Financially, municipalities will be contributing 50% of consolidated dispatch costs in FY 2015 and 0% in FY 2016.
- **Increased services to veterans**
 - Charleston County’s Veteran’s Affairs Office is experiencing a significant increase in the need for services by local veterans.
 - The workload has increased each year since 2010, and Director Donald O. Morillo, Sr. estimates a minimum 18% increase in the near future.
 - An additional full time employee in the office will enable staff to handle the increased workload.

- **Enhanced mosquito control efforts**

- Renewed focus on **maintaining County assets** through a regular schedule to keep buildings, equipment, vehicles and telephones upgraded and repaired.

- **Funding for new buildings**
 - Sheriff's Office Headquarters
 - Recycling Center (location to be determined)
 - Senior Center (location to be determined)

- **New and upgraded software**
 - Total Law Enforcement System for the Sheriff's Office to upgrade a 1991 system
 - Court management software updates to better serve citizens and organize case loads
 - Station alerting system approved by Council to shorten response time and keep fire fighters more mentally and physically prepared for the job

"We are extremely proud of our ability to maintain our elite AAA rating," said [Keith Bustraan, Charleston County's Deputy County Administrator for Finance](#). "Along with the strength of the local economy and leadership from County Council, transparent financial planning and comprehensive financial reports featuring full disclosure inspire investor confidence."

The May 21 County Council Special Finance Committee meeting is open to the public and will be held in the Council Committee Room of the Lonnie Hamilton, III, Public Services Building located at 4045 Bridge View Drive in North Charleston.

County Council's Budget Schedule (meetings are subject to change; check the calendar for the most up-to-date information: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/calendar.htm>):

Three Finance Committee Meetings are planned to discuss the FY 2014 Proposed Budget. The first and second Finance Committee Meetings will focus on the County's budget. The third Finance Committee Meeting will focus on the Special Purpose Districts' budgets and any follow up discussion for the County's budget. The schedule is as follows:

- May 21, 2012 – First Finance Committee Meeting
- May 23, 2013 – Second Finance Committee Meeting
- June 4, 2013 – Third Finance Committee Meeting
First Reading of Budget Ordinances
- June 11, 2013 – Public hearings
Second Reading of Budget Ordinances
- June 18, 2013 – Third Reading of Budget Ordinances

(Proposed Fiscal Year 2014 Budget)

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- Visit our website: www.charlestoncounty.org
- Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ChasCountyGov>
- Like us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Charleston-County-Government/474878989220753>
 - *Emergency Management Department:* <http://www.facebook.com/EMDChasCo>

- *Consolidated 9-1-1 Center's Public Education Program:*
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Charleston-County-Government/474878989220753#!/pages/Charleston-County-Consolidated-9-1-1-Center-Public-Education-Program/186965438015227>
- *Board of Elections and Voter Registration:* <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Charleston-County-Board-of-Elections-and-Voter-Registration/103895809694986>
- See us on You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/charlestoncountygov>
- Watch County Council meetings online <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/charleston-county-government>



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