

Rush to pay



JESSICA SIBLEY | THE JOURNAL

Tuesday was the last day to pay Oconee County taxes before penalties kick in. The line was long most of the day, both inside and in the vehicle drive-thru outside.

Oconee taxpayers look to avoid penalties

BY CARLOS GALARZA

THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County taxpayers rushed to make their payments Tuesday so they could avoid penalty charges.

County Treasurer Greg Nowell said the line of people looking to pay on time still stretched outside his office to the hallway and around the building about a half-hour before closing at 5 p.m.

"It's crazy here," Nowell said. "We're ahead of last year's collections."

According to Nowell, almost 3,000 taxpayers came through the Treasurer's Office on Tuesday and paid more than \$3.2 million in taxes on property and vehicles with a total taxable value that surpassed \$15.8 million.

Property tax notices are mailed in October and payable by Jan. 15. However, the deadline was extended this year because the 15th fell on a Sunday, and county offices were closed Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Payments made after Tuesday will be assessed a 3 percent penalty. Payments made after Feb. 1 face a 10 percent penalty fee and 15 percent added to the base tax amount after March 16.

Property owners still can get out of arrears by paying their tax **bill** along with interest, which increases by 3 percent every three months.

Oconee holds a delinquent tax sale in November at which properties are **sold** at auction to the highest bidder. Even then, **the property** owner has one year to redeem the auctioned property.

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