

BROOKS COUNTY RECORD

4th Quarter 2014

Issue 2



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Be Involved

Brooks County

- ◆ VOTE! - General Elections are November 4th. Poll Workers are always welcomed and needed, interested parties should visit the Elections Office
- ◆ Commission Meetings are 5p.m. on the first Monday of every month (excluding holidays)
- ◆ Skillet Festival is October 18th.

Property Tax Bills Explained, Due November 15th

Jerri Dukes—Tax Commissioner



The office hours are 8:00 A.M. through 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday and opened during lunch most days when possible.

The 2014 Brooks County property tax bills were mailed September 22, 2014. If you have not received yours, please call the Tax and Tag office at 263-4586 or 263-9023.

Taxpayers may pay their bill in person at the Brooks County Tax Commissioners Office at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman. Coming soon is the option to view and pay bills online at www.brookscountytaxoffice.com. There, you will be able to make payments not just for property, but also vehicles. The records will be maintained and updated every 20 minutes. Other features will include general information and frequently asked questions about property taxes, motor vehicles, etc. When a tax sale is scheduled, all information will be posted as well as results. The website will be a convenience to all Brooks County taxpayers.

Tax bills are due November 15th, 2014, if your bill is not paid by November 15th, interest and additional fees will be added. If late, 1% interest of the principal amount will be added November 16th and will continue to accrue on the 16th of **each** month until your bill is paid. Thirty (30) days after the due date, December 16th, 1% interest will be added plus

a fi fa of either \$30.50 or \$20.50. The amount of the fi fa depends on the amount of your bill. If your bill is under \$100 the fi fa is \$20.50; if it is over \$100 the fi fa is \$30.50. Ninety (90) days after the due date, February 16th, 2015, a 10% penalty of the principal will be added. If your bill is under \$500 and you have homestead exemption, the 10% penalty which is added on February 16th will not apply to you.

Partial payments are accepted in amounts that are convenient to you. One benefit of making payments is that additional interest and penalties are applied **only** to unpaid balances. As soon as you receive your bill, you can begin making payments. If you plan on making payments, try to have your bill paid before February 16, 2015 when the 10% penalty is added. If you are having trouble making payments by that date, you should divide the bill amount by twelve months and be diligent in making your monthly payments to have the bill paid by the time the next year's bill is due.

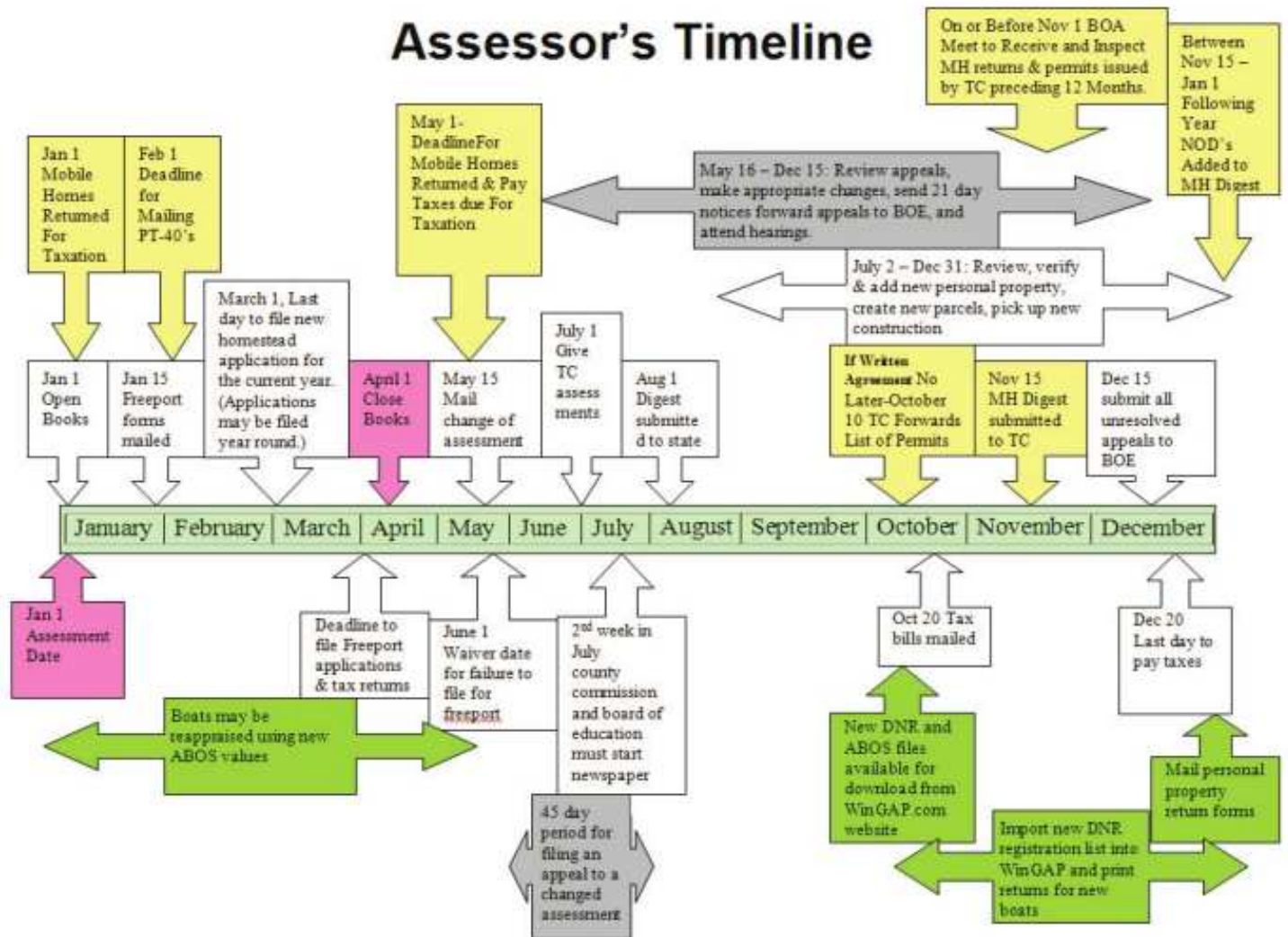
If you lived in your home located on your own land on January 1, you are eligible to file for homestead exemption. Once you have filed for homestead exemption in the Brooks County Tax Assessor's Office and are granted the exemption, you don't have to file again unless you relocate within the county or if you have a change of exemption status. If you turn 62 or 65 and have a household earned income of \$10,000 or less (excluding most retirements and social security), you could be eligible for additional exemptions. Make sure you have all exemptions available to you.

If you have any questions, please call this office anytime. We'll be glad to assist.

Tax Assessor's Work Never Stops!

Pam Jones—Chief Appraiser (229) 263-7920

Yearly Time Line for Building Digest



The Brooks County Board of Tax Assessors' office is currently working to compile the tax digest for the 2015 tax year. Although we work diligently to maintain accurate records and values, it is ultimately up to the property owner to ensure they are taxed equitably and uniformly and receiving all of the exemptions they are entitled to.

Changes in state laws, property ownership, or age and income may make you eligible for exemptions or covenants which in previous years were not available. All covenants and exemptions are voluntary and only available to those who apply; applications can be completed in our office and usually only take a few minutes.

Our office strives to be open and accessible to everyone, come by any time during business hours to discuss your property and any options which may be available to you. Many of our records as well as other property tax information can be found, free of charge, on our website at www.qpublic.net/ga/brooks.

The Tax Assessor's Office is located in the Brooks County Board of Commissioner's Office at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA 31643 and open Monday—Friday 8 am to 5pm.

Fire Protection Fee—What Is It?

Tom Fields—Fire Chief (229) 263-1047

Many people have noticed a new fee on their property tax bills called Fire Protection Fee. This fee was established by the Board of Commissioners, specifically earmarked for County firefighting, to help improve the infrastructure and service provided by County fire services. These funds will be used to construct new fire stations, purchase new equipment and trucks, and help with other community programs such as fire safety and training.

The County began preparing this project in August 2013 and prepared a five year plan for the Brooks County Fire Department. As of this newsletter, the County has already hired two daytime firefighters working 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday, and has certified a volunteer station serving the areas surrounding the City of Quitman and has begun construction on a new station off Hwy 122 that will serve the northern portion of Brooks County in Barney.

The fee is setup as follows: a \$20 fee is charged to every parcel in the County. If the parcel includes a home that receives Homestead Exemption, then an additional \$45 fee is charged, for a total of \$65 per year. If the parcel has a home that is not homestead exempt, then it is charged an additional \$65 dollars. Commercial structures/businesses are charged \$100 in addition to the \$20 parcel fee. By charging a fee, versus the traditional method of raising the County millage rate, the County can make Fire Protection Fee funds available only to the Brooks County Fire Department. The funds are kept in a separate checking account and maintains a separate budget each year. In the next several years, it is expected that a majority of taxpayers will see a decrease in their homeowner's insurance premiums with the proposed changes and growth that is expected to follow.

Burton Road Volunteer Fire Department Construction Underway

Tom Fields—Fire Chief (229) 263-1047



The Brooks County Fire Department has broken ground on a piece of land located near the intersection of Burton Road and Highway 122. Construction of the station is expected to be completed by Thanksgiving week and will provide the northeast corner of Brooks County with fire protection.

The building will house a pumper and a tanker and will be staffed with volunteers. It will be operated by the County department and is funded by the County Fire Protection Fee.

The building is being constructed by Brown Construction, from Sparks, GA and is to be constructed for around \$70,000.

Residents interested in helping with the construction, manning, and operations of the Burton Road Volunteer Fire Department should contact Chief Tom Fields at the Brooks County Fire Department. People interested in helping, whether they have previous fire experience or not, should also contact Chief Fields, as training opportunities are available for all.

Brooks County Board of Commissioners

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Quitman, GA 31643

Phone: 229-263-5561
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Sanford L. Jones—Chairman, District 2
Myra Exum—Vice Chairman, District 4
Joe Wingate—District 1
Willie Cody—District 3
James Maxwell—District 5

Justin DeVane—Administrator
Patricia Williams—Clerk

[HTTP://WWW.BROOKSCOUNTYGA.US](http://www.brookscountyga.us)

[HTTP://WWW.BROOKSCOUNTYRECORD.COM](http://www.brookscountyrecord.com)



Tax Commissioner—Jerri Dukes (229) 263-4586
Sheriff—Mike Dewey (229) 263-7558
Clerk of Courts—Ginger Forgione (229) 263-4747
Magistrate Court—Joyce Miskiel (229) 263-9989
Probate Court—Beth Hurst (229) 263-5567
Road Superintendent—Glenn Walker (229) 263-8817
Elections Superintendent—Ken Collins (229) 263-9939
Tax Assessor—Pam Jones (229) 263-7920
911/EMA Director—Mike Smith (229) 263-4262
Fire Department—Tom Fields (229) 263-1047
Building & Zoning—Billy Ingram (229) 263-5184
Extension Office—Stephanie Hollifield (229) 263-4103
Victim Witness—Peggy Wilson (229) 263-9866

Early Voting Begins, General Election November 4th

Ken Collins—Elections Supervisor (229) 263-9939

With the November 4, 2014 General Election fast approaching, Early Voting, more commonly referred to by the Georgia Secretary of State's Office as Absentee Voting in Person, is open to any registered voter in Brooks County and is provided as a convenience to allow voters to cast their ballots early in order to avoid lines on Election Day. Unfortunately, some voters have the idea that they can only cast their ballot on Election Day because it might not count if cast otherwise, this is not true. To put it simply, if you would like to cast your ballot early, for whatever reason, you may do so at the Elections Offices on S. Highland Rd. any day between October 13th and October 31st 8 to 5 daily. Early Voting will also be available for this election on Saturday, October 25th due to a federal candidate race on the ballot from 9 to 4. Early Voting isn't for a special selected few; it is for every registered voter in the county. Please take advantage of this convenience. Should there be any questions concerning Early Voting, please contact the Elections Office at 229-263-9939.

County Partners With Boys & Girls Club for Recreation

Justin DeVane—Administrator (229) 263-5561



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF VALDOSTA**

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Valdosta to oversee the Brooks County Recreation Department. The Boys and Girls Club (BGC) has begun taking applications for Area Director for the person who will oversee not only the operations and management of the Recreation activities, but will also coordinate the day-to-day activities at the local Brooks County BGC. In addition to having a dedicated person for Brooks County, the agreement allows for Brooks County to utilize BGC staff working in Valdosta, that includes a Operations Manager and Athletic Director to help coordinate leagues and events for Brooks County youth. The partnership will also hopefully lead to opportunities for the BGC and the County to work together on new facilities and to bring activities back to Brooks County for ages 6-12. The BGC recently worked with ECHOES to provide programs "After ECHOES" this past summer and is looking for more opportunities to provide activities, including events for adults, such as weekend tournaments.