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**Sussex County
Government**

News Release

Sussex County adopts \$121.1 million budget for Fiscal 2013

Georgetown, Del., June 19, 2012: Sussex County taxpayers have a few reasons to smile and a few extra dollars to spend this summer.

Sussex County Council, following a public hearing Tuesday, June 19, 2012, unanimously approved the proposed \$121.1 million budget for the 2013 fiscal year that begins July 1. Like the current year's budget that ends June 30, the newly adopted plan keeps County property taxes in check and maintains limited spending in local government for the year ahead.

While the adopted budget officially keeps in place the County's property tax rate of 44.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value for the 23rd consecutive year, it does factor in something new: a one-time tax credit for County property owners who are current on their property taxes. The one-time credit of 3.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value, or about 8 percent on the County portion of tax bills, is made possible by a revenue surplus from 2011. The credit will be included in tax bills to be mailed this August, returning about \$1 million overall to taxpayers.

With the included tax credit in next year's budget, the average County tax bill for a single-family home will drop to just below \$100 annually. That figure does not include school taxes, which are billed and collected by the County, but set by the county's individual, local school districts.

"Once again, Sussex County has shown it is possible to have a balanced, fiscally responsible budget that keep costs under control, and still provide the services people have come to

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expect,” County Administrator Todd Lawson said. “That’s not always easy to do, especially in the new economy.”

While the budget includes an \$8 to \$15 annual increase in service charges for customers in the County’s two dozen sewer districts, many of those same customers will enjoy lower assessment rates, revenue from which pays for sewer construction debt. Earlier this year, the County refinanced \$61 million in construction bonds for 18 County sewer districts; the savings from the debt refinancing, about \$8 million in total, will be passed onto customers in the form of lower assessment rates.

The adopted budget, which comprises the general fund, water and sewer, and capital portions, is down sharply from the 2011-12 fiscal year, by nearly \$19 million. That reduction is not because of drastic cuts or a spiraling local economy. Rather, it is due largely because federal dollars in the 2012 budget have since been spent to complete work on five major sewer projects in the county.

The adopted budget includes a 2.25 percent cost of living adjustment for employees. Benefits such as dental and vision reimbursement, vacation, sick leave and holidays, as well as a zero-employee-contribution pension plan, remain intact.

The new budget continues the County’s trend of limited spending in the next year, with the County continuing to look for savings by reducing purchases, limiting new hires, cross-training employees and curtailing travel when possible.

County leaders said the new budget adheres to some old-fashioned principles: keep government small, make government efficient, and always remember whose money it is.

“It might sound like a broken record, but it’s a tune I’m sure the taxpayers love to hear time and time again,” Council President Michael H. Vincent said. “This is another budget that, thanks to our very fine staff and expert financial guidance, keeps costs low and puts a little of the people’s money back in their pockets. That’s the way it should be.”

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Copies of the Fiscal Year 2013 budget, as well as the original news release issued May 22, 2012, are posted on the county’s website at www.sussexcountyde.gov.