

# *Informed*

# *Citizen's Guide*

## *Irwin County*

**Board of Elections and Registrations**

**225 East Fourth Street, Ocilla, Georgia 31774**

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# *Letter from the Irwin County Board of Elections & Registrations Dear Irwin County Citizen:*

This guide is created by the Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations to provide voters nonpartisan, unbiased information about voting for and participating in Irwin County government.

In this guide you will find information on :

- How to register to vote
- Ways to cast your vote by Absentee by Mail, Absentee in Person (Early Voting) and Election Day Voting
- Accepted IDs at the polls
- Information and Resources
- Elected Officials Information
- County Service Contact Information

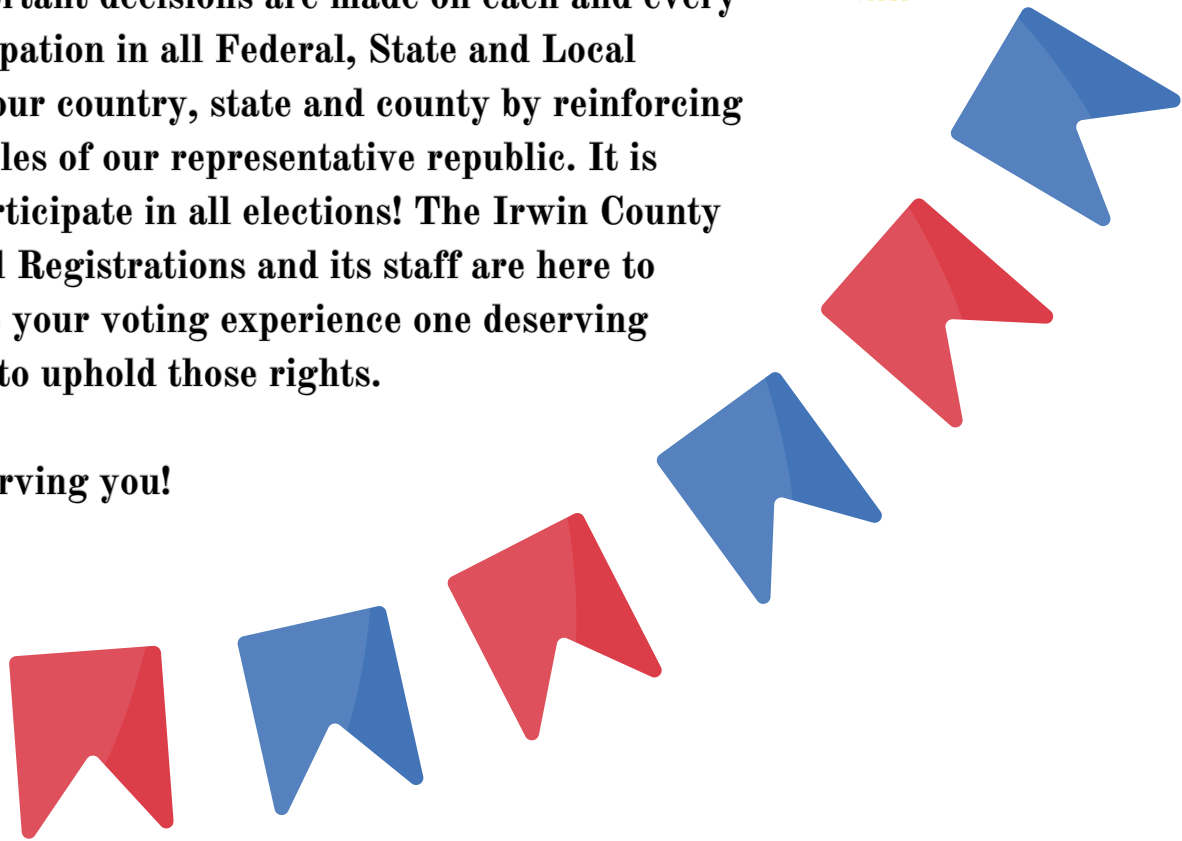
We hope this Informed Citizen's Guide helps you identify your connection to your local government and helps to make you an informed citizen. Important decisions are made on each and every ballot and your participation in all Federal, State and Local elections strengthens our country, state and county by reinforcing the democratic principles of our representative republic. It is important that you participate in all elections! The Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations and its staff are here to assist you and to make your voting experience one deserving of the sacrifices made to uphold those rights.

We look forward to serving you!

Sincerely,

Ethan N. Compton

Elections Supervisor



# WHAT IS IN THIS ★ GUIDE? ★

- Election Types.....4-5
- Upcoming Key Election Dates.....6-9
- Voter Registration.....10
- Methods of Voting.....11-13
- Voter Assistance.....14
- How Irwin County Keeps the Vote Safe.....15-16
- County and State Elected Offices.....17-18
- City Elected Offices.....18
- What is the Census and How Does it Affect Me?.....19
- What are SPLOSTs?.....20
- Recalls and Petitions.....21
- Ways to Participate in Local Government.....22
- How to Qualify for Elected Office.....23
- Local Boards and Volunteer Group Meetings.....24-25
- Irwin County / Ocilla District Maps.....26-28
- County Resources.....29



# How Often Will This Guide Be Updated?

The Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations wants every voter to be informed and up to date on not only voter information, but also about the general functions of their local government. We hope to update and distribute this guide twice a decade or more: once in the middle of each decade and once after each instance of redistricting is completed, as is required in the US Constitution after every census and uncommonly will occur due to a court order or legislative change.

# Who Are the Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations?

The Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations is a county board that was created by an act of legislation in 2013 by the Georgia General Assembly. The Board is composed of 3 appointed members. The Election Supervisor, who is not a member, but is instead an employee of the Board, informs the Board of the day to day operation of the Elections Office and communicates important information handed down from federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice, the Georgia Secretary of State, the Georgia State Elections Board and the Georgia General Assembly. One member of the Board is nominated by a vote of the Irwin County Republican Party and one member of the Board is nominated by a vote of the Irwin County Democratic Party, whose nominations are confirmed for appointment by a vote of the Irwin County Board of Commissioners. The Chair of the Board is appointed directly by the Irwin County Board of Commissioners under the oversight of our State Senator and State House Representative. All members serve two year terms that run concurrent to those of members of the Georgia General Assembly (renews every Jan on odd-numbered years). There is no limit on terms. The Board is funded by the taxpayers of Irwin County through the county budget.



# Let's Talk Election Types

There are several types of elections that are conducted in the State of Georgia: Presidential Preference Primaries, Primary Elections, General Elections, Special Elections and Runoff Elections.

## Presidential Preference Primary

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-191 states “Such primary shall be held in each year in which a presidential election is to be conducted on a date selected by the Secretary of State which shall not be later than the second Tuesday in June of such year. The Secretary of State shall select such date no later than December 1 of the year immediately preceding such primary.”

In the State of Georgia, the PPP is normally held on the first Tuesday in March, but is subject to change as per the authority of the Secretary of State.

This election is conducted to help nominate a presidential candidate for the National Democratic and Republican parties to be on the November General Election Ballot. During a Primary Election, you are required to select a ballot style: Republican, Democratic or Nonpartisan containing only that party's nominees. Nonpartisan ballots only contain contests that are neither Democratic nor Republican such as judges, school board or referendums, which are on both party ballots.

## Primary Election

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-150 states “Whenever any political party holds a primary to nominate candidates for public offices to be filled in the ensuing November election, such primary shall be held on the first Tuesday of the twenty-fourth week prior to the November General Election in each even-numbered year or, in the case of municipalities, on the third Tuesday in July in each odd-numbered year.” In the case of Georgia, the May Primary occurs 24 weeks prior to the General Election. The City of Ocilla does not hold primaries because all their offices are nonpartisan.

Primary Elections are conducted to nominate candidates to be on the November General Election ballot. During a Primary Election, you are required to select a ballot style: Republican, Democratic or Nonpartisan containing only that party's nominees. Nonpartisan ballots only contain contests that are neither Democratic nor Republican such as judges or school board, which are on both party ballots.

Georgia is a non-declaring state. You do not register with any political party as part of registering to vote and have the freedom to select any party's ballot between different Primary Elections without the need to change your voter registration beforehand. Voting one party's ballot style in one primary does not lock you into having to vote that party's candidate in the ensuing General Election- it only provides you with a ballot style that will contain that party's candidates for only that election.



# Let's Keep Talking Election Types

## General Election

General Elections are conducted on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. In a General Election, you will see the candidates that were nominated in the Primary Election. The General Election is the election that elects the candidate into office. In a General Election, you do not have to choose a ballot style- all candidates and parties who have qualified will be on one ballot.

## Special Election

Special Elections, as their names state, take place under special circumstances. A Special Election may occur to fill a vacancy due to the death, resignation or removal of an elected official or can be for a special referendum or question. Most Special Elections are held in conjunction with a Primary or General Election in order to be more convenient for voters and save taxpayer funds. However, there are dates set aside in the law for when Special Elections can be conducted when not in conjunction with a Primary or General Election.

## O.C.G.A. § 21-2-540 states:

In odd-numbered years, any such special election shall only be held on:

The third Tuesday in March; The third Tuesday in June; The third Tuesday in September; or The Tuesday after the first Monday in November

In even-numbered years, any such special election shall only be held on:

The third Tuesday in March; provided, however, that in the event that a special election is to be held under this provision in a year in which a presidential preference primary is to be held, then any such special election shall be held on the date of and in conjunction with the presidential preference primary; The date of the general primary; or the Tuesday after the first Monday in November

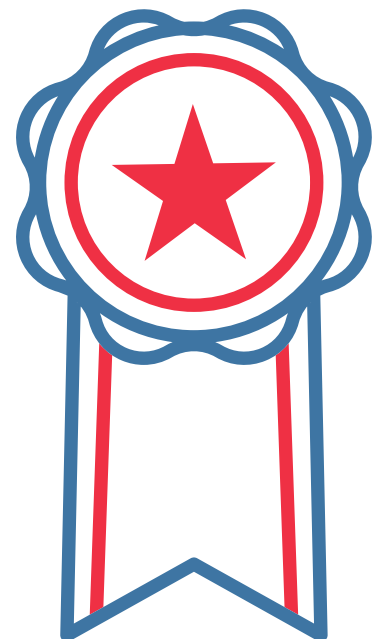
## Runoff Election

Runoff Elections are held when no candidate in a particular contest is able to receive 50% +1 of the total number of votes cast for that contest for any contest except for President. Runoff Elections are held 28 days after the regular election date. In a Primary Election, it is important for voters to know that you must vote the same ballot style in the Runoff Election as you did in the Primary Election. If you voted a Nonpartisan ballot in the Primary Election, you may choose a ballot style of your choice in the ensuing runoff. If you were registered but did not vote in the Primary Election and it goes to a Runoff Election, you ARE eligible to vote in the Runoff Election and may choose the available ballot style of your choice.



# How to Protect your Voter Registration

- Check with our office or online at [mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://mvp.sos.ga.gov) to ensure your voter registration is up to date every March and September to make sure you're not surprised at the polls by not being on the rolls.
- On your voter registration, provide optional data such as your full SSN and contact information such as your email address and/or phone number so that we can minimize the risk of false matches on database searches and so we can directly contact you in case of a complication regarding your voter registration or, during an election, your vote itself.
- If you get your mail at any address other than your residential address, please include that mailing address on your voter registration as well to ensure we do not receive any returned mail from you, which can lead to being removed from the voter rolls.
- When renewing your drivers' license, only check the box if you do NOT want our office to update your voter registration using the drivers' license information.
  - While you can have a business address on your drivers' license, we NEED a residential address on file, and it is a crime to submit a non-residential address as your residential address on your voter registration.
- If registering to vote for the first time in Georgia via a mail-in application, it is federal law that you include a copy of your identification or proof of citizenship in the pocket the paper form provides.
  - If you do not do so, your voter registration remains in pending status until such time as our office is able to obtain a verified confirmation of your identity, residence and citizenship.



# Key Election Dates for 2026

Should there be a need for any Special Elections in 2026, they can only occur on the following dates:

**May 19th, 2026 (date of General Primary) \* November 3rd, 2026 (date of General Election)**

## **March 2nd- March 6th, 2026: County Qualifying Period**

County Commission Districts 2 & 4, School Board Districts 1, 3 and 5, Clerk of Superior Court  
9a-5p Monday - Thursday, 9a-Noon Friday

## **March 9th- May 8th, 2026: Absentee Ballot Application Period**

May General Primary \* [securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov](https://securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov) \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **April 20th, 2026: Voter Registration Deadline**

May General Primary \* [mvp.sos.ga.gov](https://mvp.sos.ga.gov) \* 229-468-0081 \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **April 27th- May 15th, 2026: Early Voting**

May General Primary \* Monday - Saturday 8a - 5p \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **May 19th, 2026: General Primary Election Day**

Absentee by Mail ballots must be received by our office by 7pm to count \* Open 7a-7p

- 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774 - Ocilla
- 1 Co Rd 302 Fitzgerald, GA 31750 - Irwinville

## **August 4th- October 23rd, 2026: Absentee Ballot Application Period**

November General Election \* [securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov](https://securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov) \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **October 5th, 2026: Voter Registration Deadline**

November General Election \* [mvp.sos.ga.gov](https://mvp.sos.ga.gov) \* 229-468-0081 \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **October 13th - 30th, 2026: Early Voting**

November General Election \* Monday - Saturday 8a - 5p \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **November 3rd, 2026: General Election Day**

Absentee by Mail ballots must be received by our office by 7pm to count \* Open 7a-7p

- 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774 - Ocilla
- 1 Co Rd 302 Fitzgerald, GA 31750 - Irwinville

\*\*\*DISCLAIMER: The dates for 2026 are subject to change depending on the Georgia General Assembly. Please visit our website at [www.irwincounty-ga.gov](http://www.irwincounty-ga.gov) for all election information and updates.



# Key Election Dates for 2027

Should there be a need for any Special Elections in 2027, they can only occur on the following dates:

**\* March 16th, 2027 \* June 15th, 2027 \* September 21st, 2027 \*  
November 2nd, 2027 (date of Ocilla Municipal General Election)**

## **August 16th - August 20th, 2027: Ocilla City Qualifying Period**

Ocilla City Council Districts 2, 4 and 5 \* 9a-5p Monday - Thursday, 9a-Noon Friday

## **September 27th- October 22nd, 2027: Absentee Ballot Application Period**

November General Election \* [securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov](https://securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov) \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **October 4th, 2027: Voter Registration Deadline**

November General Election \* [mvp.sos.ga.gov](https://mvp.sos.ga.gov) \* 229-468-0081 \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

## **October 11th - October 29th, 2027: Early Voting**

November General Election \* Monday - Saturday 8a - 5p \* 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774

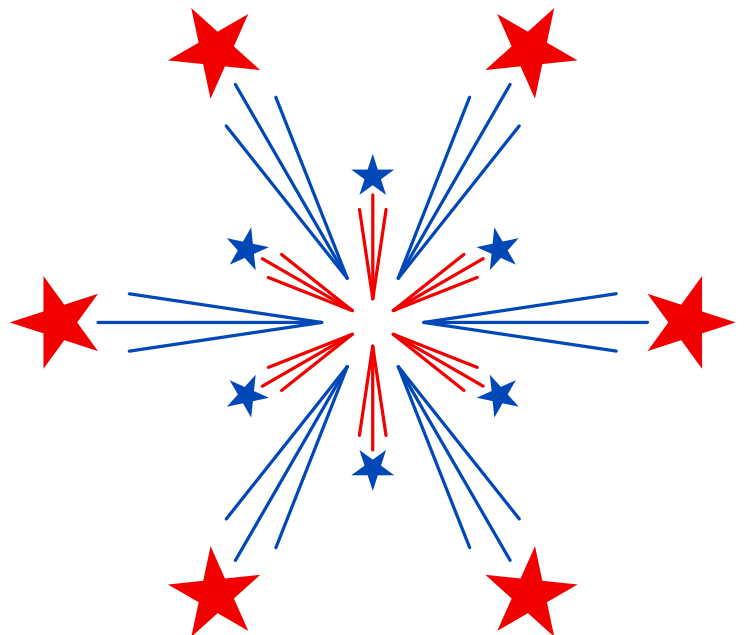
## **November 2nd, 2027: Ocilla Municipal General Election Day**

Absentee by Mail ballots must be received by our office by 7pm to count \* Open 7a-7p

- 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774 - Ocilla

Only voters residing within the City of Ocilla's boundaries are able to vote in Ocilla's elections.

\*\*\*DISCLAIMER: The dates for 2027 are subject to change depending on the Georgia General Assembly. Please visit our website at [www.irwincounty-ga.gov](http://www.irwincounty-ga.gov) for all election information and updates.



# Key Election Dates for 2028

Should there be a need for any Special Elections in 2028, they can only occur on the following dates: \* February-April 2028 (date set by Secretary of State for Presidential Preference Primary) \* May 16th, 2028 (date of General Primary / Nonpartisan General) \* November 7th, 2028 (date of General Election) \*

## March 6th- March 10th, 2028: County Qualifying Period

County Commission Districts 1 & 3, School Board Districts 2 and 4, County Commission Chair, Magistrate Judge, Probate Judge, Clerk of Superior Court, Coroner, Tax Commissioner, Sheriff  
9a-5p Monday - Thursday, 9a-Noon Friday

# Key Election Dates for 2029

Should there be a need for any Special Elections in 2029, they can only occur on the following dates: \* March 20th, 2029 \* June 19th, 2029 \* September 18th, 2029 \* November 6th, 2029 (date of Ocilla Municipal General Election) \*

## August 20th - August 24th, 2029: Ocilla City Qualifying Period

Ocilla City Council Districts 1 and 3, Mayor \* 9a-5p Monday - Thursday, 9a-Noon Friday

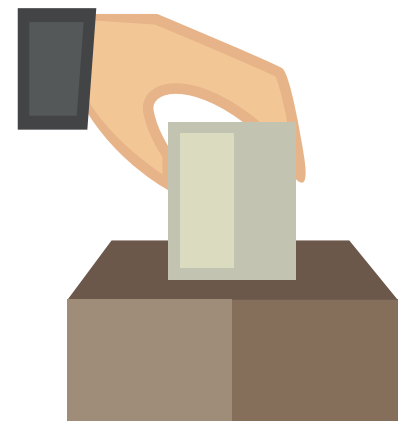
# Key Election Dates for 2030

Should there be a need for any Special Elections in 2030, they can only occur on the following dates: \* March 19th, 2030 \* May 21st, 2030 (date of General Primary) \* November 5th, 2030 (date of General Election) \*

## March 4th- March 8th, 2030: County Qualifying Period

County Commission Districts 2 & 4, School Board Districts 1, 3 and 5  
9a-5p Monday - Thursday, 9a-Noon Friday

Only voters residing within the City of Ocilla's boundaries are able to vote in Ocilla's elections.  
\*\*\*DISCLAIMER: The dates for 2028, 2029 and 2030 are subject to change depending on the Georgia General Assembly. Please visit our website at [www.irwincounty-ga.gov](http://www.irwincounty-ga.gov) for all election information and updates.



# Voter Registration

## Ways to Register

### Online:

You can register to vote, check your registration information, update your registration information, check Early Voting and Election Day Times, Dates and Locations and view your sample ballot online at [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov). You must have a valid Georgia Driver's License to use this site. Once you have submitted your registration, it will arrive on our County Election Dashboard the following morning for processing.

### Paper Application:

Paper applications are available in the Elections Office and public assistance offices such as the Department for Family and Children Services. Irwin County High School students aged 17 1/2 and older are able to register or pre-register using a paper application with either the Principal or the Senior Guidance Councilor who are both sworn deputy registrars.

### Department of Drivers Services (Motor Voter):

For the vast majority of voters, the most common way they register to vote is by applying for or renewing a Georgia Drivers License or Georgia Identification Card. Unless you specifically opt out of forwarding your information to our office, it will be sent to us by the Department of Drivers Services in most cases within the next 2-5 business days for processing. To be sure your information was properly transmitted, please check online at [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov), call us at **(229)468-0081** or stop by our office to confirm before the next election after changing address, especially if you've recently changed states or counties.

## IMPORTANT:

Please keep your voter registration up to date. If you move or change your name, you must notify us immediately. Should you move to another County or State, you must register to vote in that County or State. **YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION DOES NOT ALWAYS FOLLOW YOU. YOU MAY ONLY REGISTER TO VOTE IN ONE STATE. YOU CANNOT HAVE MULTIPLE REGISTRATIONS.**



**VOTING TWICE IS A  
CRIMINAL OFFENSE  
PUNISHABLE BY LAW**

# How do I Vote?

## Vote Early by Mail

Currently, ballots may be requested 78 days prior to the election. Requested ballots begin being mailed out 28 days prior to the election date. The ballots for individuals covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act must be mailed out or sent electronically 49 days prior to any election with a federal candidate on the ballot.

Elderly (65 and older) and Disabled voters who apply for an absentee by mail ballot are able to opt in on the application to have that application apply for all elections that they qualify to vote in for the remainder of the calendar year.

The deadline to apply for an absentee by mail ballot is 11 days prior to the date of an election.

### How to Request an Absentee by Mail Ballot:

It is a misdemeanor for anyone to send you an absentee by mail ballot application unsolicited, including elections officials. If we have received a written request for an absentee by mail ballot application by letter or email, we will gladly mail or email an application to you. Conversely, you or a friend or relative may come to our office and pick up a paper application from the elections office, although once filled out, only yourself, a relative or your caretaker can deliver the application to our office, in person, by mail or by email. You may email us to request an absentee by mail ballot application at **elections@irwincounty-ga.gov**. Absentee by Mail ballots can be applied for online at **securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov**. The online process verifies your identity, guides you through filling out the form then allows you to download and print the completed form, as by law it requires a pen and ink signature in order to be accepted. Electronic signatures do not count. Signed, completed applications must be delivered to our office before the absentee ballot request deadline 11 days prior to an election day, and can only be handled by the list of people who can return an absentee ballot as detailed below.

### How to Return an Absentee by Mail Ballot:

Voters should mail their voted ballots back to our office at least 7-10 days prior to Election Day to ensure a timely delivery and help ensure that their ballot will be counted.

**ALL VOTED BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED INTO THE ELECTIONS OFFICE ON ELECTION DAY BY 7:00PM IN ORDER TO BE COUNTED.**

Ballots can be returned in the following ways:

- By mail
  - Hand Delivered to the Elections Office
    - Your absentee by mail ballot may be returned by yourself or your spouse, mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, or an individual living in the same household as you. Only these people, mail carriers and sworn county absentee clerks can handle absentee ballots.
- HANDLING OF AN ABSENTEE BALLOT BY ANYONE NOT LISTED ABOVE IS A FELONY.**

# How do I Vote?

- Ballots returned by mail need to have adequate postage on the ballot when mailing back. Normal postage currently required to mail a ballot is \$0.97 or 2 stamps.
- If you do not receive your ballot in a timely manner (5-7 business days after submitting your application), please contact the Elections Office IMMEDIATELY at 229-468-0081.
- If you have requested an Absentee by Mail ballot and decide to vote in person early or on Election Day, please contact the Elections Office to have your absentee ballot canceled **PRIOR** to going to vote to save time at the polls for yourself and others. Please call 229-468-0081 to cancel. If or when you receive the canceled ballot, please return it to our office to ensure it is securely marked spoiled and stored with the rest of our records.

## NO MATTER WHAT METHOD YOU USE TO VOTE, VERIFY THAT THE CORRECT BALLOT HAS BEEN ISSUED TO YOU FOR YOUR DISTRICTS

All voters are assigned to polling locations and political districts based on their residential address. The specific set of different political districts for all offices who represent you and where you vote are called a precinct combo. A series of precinct combos are at the top of every ballot in the header to signify what contests are on that ballot based on who its made to be voted on by. It is important that you do your homework and know the political representatives for where you live. In Irwin County, the first digit of your combo number is your school board district, the second digit is your county commission district, and the last digit is your city council district, or 0 if you do not live in city limits.

### In Irwin County we have:

- One U.S. Congressional District which is 8
- One State Senate District which is 13
- One State House of Representatives District which is 169
- One Judicial Circuit which is the Tift Circuit
- Five County Board of Education Districts
- Four County Commissioner Districts

If you feel that you have received the inforrect ballot, please contact elections staff immediately!

**DO NOT VOTE A BALLOT YOU  
THINK IS WRONG UNTIL  
CONFIRMED BY ELECTIONS  
STAFF.**





## WHAT ID SHOULD I BRING TO THE POLLS?

### ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF PHOTO ID TO BRING TO THE POLLS:

- A Georgia driver's license which was properly issued by the appropriate state agency;
- A valid Georgia voter identification card or other valid identification card issued by a branch, department, agency, or entity of the State of Georgia, any other state, or the United States authorized by law to issue personal identification, provided that such identification card contains a photograph of the voter;
- A valid United States passport;
- A valid employee identification card containing a photograph of the voter and issued by any branch, department, agency or entity of the United States Government, this state or any county, municipality, board, authority, or other entity of this state;
- A valid United States military identification card, provided that such identification card contains a photograph of the voter; or
- A valid tribal identification card containing a photograph of the voter

## Early Voting

Voters may vote early, in person beginning on the Monday of the third week before Election Day. There are also 2 Saturday voting days as well, for a total of 17 early voting days to cast your vote.

All of Irwin County early votes at the Elections Office, which is open during early voting from 8a - 5p Monday through Saturday until the close of early voting on 5p the Friday before Election Day.

## Election Day

In addition to the early voting period and the opportunities provided by voting absentee by mail, both of Irwin County's polling locations will be open on Election Day from 7a - 7p.

Those polling locations are:

- Irwin County Elections Office
  - 225 E 4th St, Ocilla, GA 31774
- Irwinville Community Center
  - 1 Co Rd 302, Fitzgerald, GA 31750

Please visit [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov) to find your Election Day polling location. On Election Day, you must vote at your assigned polling location based off your address.



# Voter Assistance

## Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

UOCAVA is federal legislation that ensures that all U.S. citizens who are service members or qualified family members who are deployed outside of their home voting jurisdiction, as well as overseas citizens are able to vote in their home states or counties via mail or electronic absentee ballot with the ability for their ballot to be counted up to three days after the close of polls if their ballot is postmarked or transmitted before 7p on Election Day for federal elections.

### Resources:

- [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov)
- [www.fvap.gov/georgia](http://www.fvap.gov/georgia)

## Voters with Disabilities

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) is federal legislation that requires every polling place to be accessible and to have set up for use accessible voting equipment that may be used for any voter. Additional assistance may be available, such as Assistive Technology Interface (ATI) kits attached to voting machines with headphones and braille labeled controllers or sip-and-puff interface connectors to allow disabled voters to be able to vote their ballot without the need for another person being required to assist them. Voters can contact the Elections Office for additional information.

Voters who are unable to read or write the English language or are physically disabled may receive assistance inside the voting booth. The person assisting must sign the Oath of Person Assisting on their voter certificate. Those are the only criteria that allow the voter to receive assistance during voting. Assisting a voter who does not meet one or both of those qualifications is a felony.

## Serve Your Community by Becoming a Poll Worker

If you are interested in serving as a poll worker, please contact the Elections Office at 229-468-0081 to see if positions are available. All positions are paid unless requested to be otherwise by the volunteer and mandatory training is required before each election that is not a runoff.



# How Irwin County Secures the Vote

## Before the Election

- Before every election, Logic and Accuracy Testing of all elections equipment is performed to ensure they are functional and accurate.
  - This process is scheduled in advance and advertised on the county's website, in The Ocilla Star, as well as posted in the Elections Office and at the Irwin County Courthouse so that the public has an opportunity to observe this process.

## After the Election

- Georgia Law currently requires a Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA) of the contest at the top of the ballot for every election held statewide, plus an additional audit for one of any statewide federal or state-level elected office if that contest is on the ballot and not the top ballot contest.
  - In a Risk-Limiting Audit, a random sample of voters' ballots are checked by hand to confirm that computers counted the ballots accurately and the election results are correct. An RLA can stop as soon as it finds strong evidence that the reported winner really got more votes, or it can lead to a full hand count of all ballots, depending on the required level of confidence in the results needed, with closer contests requiring more ballots counted in order to ensure confidence in the results' accuracy. RLAs provide reassurance when outcomes are right, as well as safeguarding against hacks and errors that could produce wrong results.
- The Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations has chosen to enshrine within their bylaws a commitment to go above and beyond the audits defined in state law- In addition, the following circumstances warrant the auditing of additional contests, or to audit additional batches of ballots than those selected by the state for selected contests:
  - A contest is within a 10% margin between the winning candidate and the candidate with the next highest number of votes within Irwin County.
  - Physical, documented evidence of circumstances either internal or external that may affect the sanctity of the election's results to such a degree as the Election Supervisor recommends to the Board that they vote to add affected precincts and/or contests to the audit.
- All contests selected by the Board for additional auditing shall be audited by hand tallying ALL BALLOTS CAST and comparing those results to those of the Official and Complete Election Summary Report.
  - These audits are performed by volunteers supplied by both the Irwin County Republican and Democratic Parties in equal amounts to ensure an impartial, outside audit of our results to ensure their accuracy.
  - These audits are announced in The Ocilla Star, on the county website and posted both in the Elections Office and the Irwin County Courthouse and are open for observation by the press and the general public.

# How Irwin County Secures the Vote Pt.2

## During the Election

- Across numerous sheets per precinct (voting location), we keep track of the serial number of every piece of equipment and of the serialized tamper seals on every door and latch that can be accessed on said equipment.
  - All these seals must match those documented at the close of Logic and Accuracy Testing unless required to be removed as part of the electoral process. All cases when seals are changed are documented with the old seals and the new ones.
  - Separate copies exist of these documents at separate locations by separate elections officials to negate the possibility of alteration by one bad actor.
- Before each voter casts their paper ballot into the ballot box, we ask the voter to review their selections and to confirm to us that they match how they wish to vote.
  - Doing this ensures that the ballots which will face our post election hand audit matches the true and accurate will of Irwin County voters and lets us catch any non-matching ballots before that vote is cast, so only the voters' true intent is put into the ballot box. Checking your ballot before you cast it is how the voters of Irwin County help to safeguard the vote, so please be sure to do your part.
- The first voter for each precinct ready to cast their ballot into the ballot box will check the opening tabulator tapes, making sure they read no votes cast. Then the voter will check the screen of the tabulator, confirming that it shows no votes cast. Then the voter will check the inside of the emergency ballot bin, confirming that it has no ballots within it. Then they will check inside the ballot box, confirming that it has no ballots within it.
  - Only after these steps have been completed and each result announced for the entire precinct to hear will the first ballot be able to be cast.
- At opening, every hour during voting and at closing, poll officers compare the number of voters checked in versus the number of ballots printed by each ballot marking device versus the number of ballots cast into the ballot box, ensuring that all three numbers match at all times or have documentation explaining each non-matching number.
  - Those results are then compared to the number of paper voter certificates printed out by the poll pads at voter check in and at the elections office to ensure the correct number and identities of voters have been issued credit for voting for each election.
- Local law enforcement keep close to all polling places while polls are open, ready to respond at a moment's notice in case an emergency occurs in order to protect all staff, voters and ballots.
- As votes are counted, we hand out our printed result reports to local media and public observers BEFORE sending them electronically to the state to ensure that the results on paper and online match or will be caught and rectified immediately.



# ELECTED OFFICES for IRWIN COUNTY AND TERMS

Office	Term	Incumbent	Next Election Year
Commission Chair	4	Vince Thompson (R)	2028
District 1 Commissioner	4	Paul McIntyre (R)	2028
District 2 Commissioner	4	Don Hickey (R)	2026
District 3 Commissioner	4	Aldene Tyson (D)	2028
District 4 Commissioner	4	Chris G. Paulk (R)	2026
Sheriff	4	Cody Vaughn (R)	2028
Probate Judge	4	Ronnie McCurdy	2028
Clerk of Superior Court	4	Nancy Ross (I)	2028
Magistrate Judge	4	Heather Culpepper	2028
Tax Commissioner	4	Lindsey Ross Todd (R)	2028
Coroner	4	Brandon Fletcher (R)	2028
Chief Judge Tift Superior Court	4	Bill Reinhardt	2026
Tift Superior Court Judge	4	Melanie Cross	2028
Tift Superior Court Judge	4	Ralph Powell	2026
School Board District 1	4	Kurt Wilmot	2026
School Board District 2	4	Chandler Rowe	2028
School Board District 3	4	Paige Wynn	2026
School Board District 4	4	Holly Conner	2028
School Board District 5	4	James Curtis	2026
State Senate District 13	2	Carden Summers (R)	2026
State House District 169	2	Angie O'Steen (R)	2026
Governor	4	Brian Kemp (R) (Term-Limited)	2026
Lieutenant Governor	4	Burt Jones (R)	2026
Attorney General	4	Chris Carr (R)	2026
Secretary of State	4	Brad Raffensperger (R)	2026
State School Superintendent	4	Richard Woods (R)	2026
Commissioner of Agriculture	4	Tyler Harper (R)	2026
Commissioner of Insurance	4	John King (R)	2026
Commissioner of Labor	4	Bárbara Rivera Holmes (R)	2026
President / Vice President	4	Donald Trump / JD Vance (R) (Term-Limited)	2028
United States Senate	4	Jon Ossoff (D)	2026
United States Senate	4	Raphael Warnock (D)	2028
United States Congress District 8	2	Austin Scott (R)	2026

## ELECTED OFFICES for IRWIN COUNTY AND TERMS, Pg. 2

Office	Term	Incumbent	Next Election Year
Public Service Commissioner 1	6*	Jason Shaw (R)	2028*
Public Service Commissioner 2	6*	Alicia Johnson (D)	2030*
Public Service Commissioner 3	6*	Peter Hubbard (D)	2026*
Public Service Commissioner 4	6*	Lauren “Bubba” McDonald (R)	2028*
Public Service Commissioner 5	6*	Tricia Pridemore (R)	2026*
District Attorney, Tift Circuit	4	Patrick Warren (R)	2028

Election Years and Terms for Public Service Commission through 2034 have been altered by HB 1312 of 2024

## ELECTED OFFICES for OCILLA AND TERMS

Office	Term	Incumbent	Next Election Year
Mayor	4	Melvin Harper, II	2029
District 1 City Council	4	Cortney Austin	2029
District 2 City Council	4	Patrice Williams-Manley	2027
District 3 City Council	4	LaRounda Thomas	2029
District 4 City Council	4	Chris A. Paulk	2027
District 5 City Council	4	Clae Wynn	2027

Only voters residing within the City of Ocilla’s boundaries are able to vote in Ocilla’s elections.



Ocilla Municipal Services Building, 111 N Irwin Ave Ocilla, GA 31774

# What is the Census and How Does it Affect Me?

The Census happens at the start of each decade and has been required by the US Constitution since 1790. The Census was originally created to determine the population of each state so that the correct number of delegates in the House of Representatives could be apportioned to each state.

Since then, the effects of the Census have grown to affect how many Electoral College votes each state has to determine who wins in Presidential elections, how much federal funding gets dispersed to each state, county and municipal area, how much state funding goes to each county and municipal area, and helps decide the size and shape of district lines for every elected office that isn't elected at large.

The Census helps the Federal and State Governments and other decision makers determine how to disperse over \$600 billion of funding each year. Using Demographic Data from the Census as well as other Census Bureau surveys, decision makers can analyze states, counties, cities, towns, villages, and even blocks to inform their decisions of where funding is needed. This aid goes to schools, firehouses, hospitals, and many other vital institutions that otherwise would not be able to operate. It is also used to plan for and fund larger nationwide programs such as public health initiatives and infrastructure programs. To put it simply; the Census determines how important and powerful you and your neighbors are on the local, state and national level.

Poor Census turnout can “shrink” a city or county population, which means that they get less funding from the state or federal government, which means that local services start suffering: worse roads, less jobs, worse schools, worse parks and more... Unless the local government raises taxes to stop the financial bleeding which only further crunches the people.

When an area has a low Census response, it leads to their tax money that went to the state and national level being spent in places with higher Census responses.

So, in 2030 when the Census starts again- the people of Irwin County need to make sure they fill it out to give Irwin County and Ocilla a greater voice in state and national government. Make sure your neighbors fill it out- because better roads, better services, hospital funding, better schools, and a better heard voice for your vote and your taxes depend on a good response so that we get to keep our fair share of what we paid in.



# What is a SPLOST?

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes, or SPLOSTs, are sales taxes only for a certain area which are only legally allowed to be used for clearly stated items for a set length of time and are voted on by the people of that area.

SPLOSTs are taxes collected typically for special projects such as construction, road work, safety vehicles or equipment and education, and typically range from 0.5%-1% for a period of 2 - 6 years. By applying a SPLOST as a temporary sales tax to cover an expense, people passing through an area are partially paying for these special expenditures in addition to locals, sharing the load while avoiding governments paying for these items with other means such as property tax increases, which hit locals only, have less limits on them and are tougher to roll back. SPLOSTs also give voters more control over approving exactly how their tax dollars are spent by giving them the power to vote for or against larger projects.

When on the ballot, state law mandates that each project the SPLOST is for must be stated in the referendum text, how long the tax will be in effect and how much money is expected to be raised by the tax, so that the people know exactly what they're voting for when the time comes. The Regional Transportation SPLOST is slightly different, where due to its complexity the details of the project and its cap are online hosted by the South GA Regional Commission. This kind of Regional SPLOST also runs for 10 years and is passed if the majority of the total area passes it, even if a member county fails to pass it. If a SPLOST ever raises more money than estimated, by law the excess raised funds can only be used to pay off debt of that government, unless there is no remaining debt, in which case excess SPLOST funds are applied as a discount on the property taxes of local citizens.

## The SPLOSTs currently in effect in Irwin County are:

- 1% \$5.75M Irwin County Education SPLOST passed in May 2026 for 5 years
- 1% South GA Regional Transportation SPLOST passed in May 2024 for 10 years
- 1% \$5.5M Ocilla / Irwin County General Purpose SPLOST passed in November 2024 for 6 years



# What are Petitions?

Petitions are various ways that registered voters of an area can have direct impact on their government outside of elections. The kinds of petitions vary from backing an independent or third party candidate so that their name can be printed on the ballot in an election, supporting a candidate who claims to be too poor to pay the qualifying fee so that they can run for office anyways, recalling an elected official who has performed crimes or other acts of malfeasance, or altering or nullifying unpopular resolutions of their government.

Depending on the type, petitions can require hundreds to thousands of signatures within a 15-30 day timeframe, with each page needing to be notarized and each person signing having to be verified as a registered voter as of the last general election or as of the last election of the official being recalled.

In the case of recalling an elected official, the interested parties must contact the Elections Office to receive the correct petition documents and begin the application timeframe, where 100 or 10% of the registered voters for the last general election of that elected official's district, whichever is lesser, must sign to be co-sponsors of the recall. The application must have every sheet notarized and returned to the Elections Office before the end of the 15 day timeframe, then the Elections Office has up to 4 days to verify the signatures, making sure they were registered voters of that official's district as of their last general election. If the minimum number of signatures are found to be valid, the actual Recall Petition is issued to the sponsors of the recall effort, and the elected official in question must be notified and has the right within 4 days to challenge the sponsors of the recall in court if the reasons for the recall are untrue or unlawful. The petition circulators would then have 30 days to gather a number of signatures of registered voters from that district, who were registered as of the last general election for that office within that district, equal to 30% of the votes cast at that last general election for that office. The Elections Office would then verify the signatures within the next 30 days, and if found to be valid, call a special recall election within the next 5 days to be held within the following 30-45 days. That Recall Election would only have the question listing if the elected official in question should be recalled from office, yes or no. If yes wins, that seat is immediately vacated as if that official had resigned and the laws of filling the empty seat would take effect, usually leading to a special election. A recalled official can qualify to fill the empty seat they were removed from.

The same general procedure is in place for all petition types, with mainly the timeframes and numbers of signatures changing depending on the petition. Contact the Elections Office for more information.



# How Can I be More of a Part of My Local Government?

Regardless of whether or not you take part, you remain a part of your community and its government. So why not participate and help shape its direction towards what matters to you most?

The following are some of the best ways to start taking part in your local government more:

- Attend local board, commission and committee meetings
  - Get informed on current business, issues and decisions made that will have impacted you previously, currently and in the near future.
  - Inform officials about what is important to you during public comment.
  - Ask how you can help when faced with a need.
    - The more effort put into a community, the more it is able to give back in kind.
- Ask to meet with local officials outside of meetings
  - While often very busy, they will almost always try to schedule time to meet with the people they serve to gain more perspectives and insight into everything happening within the areas they represent.
  - Also, they can often provide additional information behind the reasoning and priorities of recent and current decisions to provide you with a greater understanding of why things are happening as they are in your community.
- Ask to be appointed to boards and committees you are knowledgeable and/or passionate about
  - There may be current or future openings and having willing volunteers who are up to date on current matters ensures a smoother transition.
  - A lot of decisions are made on this level, or these entities provide recommendations that typically influence elected officials' decisions.
- Run for office
  - Sometimes you have to do it yourself to spearhead a cause you're passionate about.
  - Learn about the office or position, prepare your positions about all aspects of that office or position, gather the application information, get support, make your plan and when qualifying opens for that office or position, run for office.



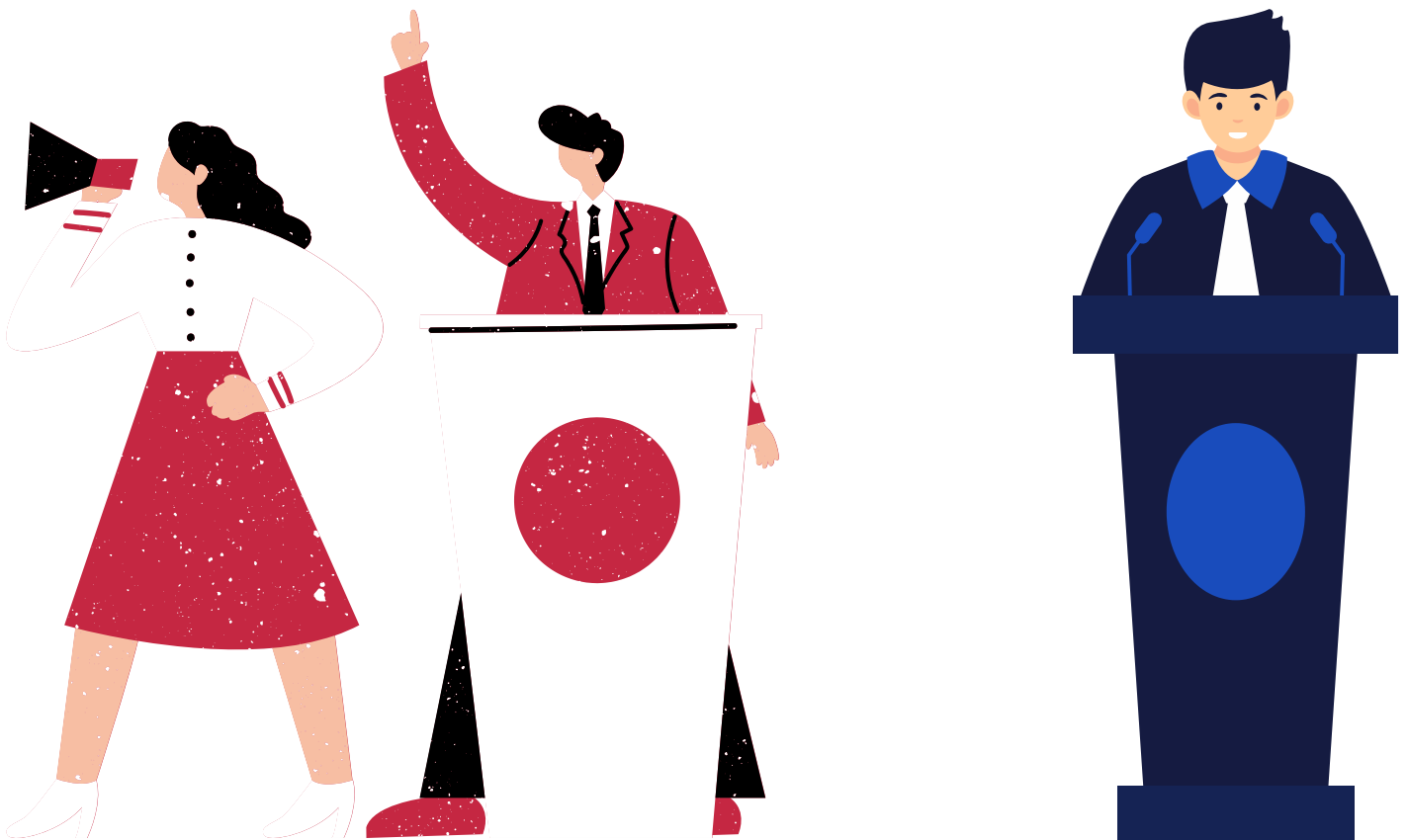
# Interested in Running for Local Office?

Qualifying for all Irwin County and City of Ocilla elected offices is held at the Elections Office. Qualifying is a 2 1/2 to 4 1/2 day period where people interested in running for office submit the required documents and forms and pay the fees needed to make their candidacy official and put their names on the ballot. We typically hold qualifying for the maximum period of time allowed by law, usually meaning that on the week qualifying is held, we will accept documentation during business hours starting at 9a on that Monday and closing qualifying at Noon on that Friday. Unless specifically stated otherwise in state law, **ALL QUALIFYING FORMS AND REQUIREMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO THE ELECTIONS OFFICE BY THE END OF QUALIFYING IN ORDER TO BE ACCEPTED.**

Some offices have residency requirements of varying lengths in order to qualify, and some offices have additional forms and qualifications necessary in order to qualify.

The qualifying fee for a local elected position is equal to 3% of the annual salary for that elected office, either before or including all supplemental pay depending on the office sought. The list of offices available for qualifying, each office's qualifying fee and the dates and times of qualifying are listed publicly before February 1st of each year for all cases except for special elections.

Call, email or visit our office for more information about which offices you qualify to run for and what is required to run for that office.



# Local Board, Commission and Community Meetings

- Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations
  - Typically meets on the second Tuesday of every non-election month at 4:00pm in the Elections Office portion of the County Admin Office. Relocation to the Irwin County Courtroom is under consideration once it becomes equipped for livestreaming.
  - Except for emergencies, meets at 3pm and 5:15pm on the Friday after every election to reconcile and certify the results respectively.
  - Posts agendas at the County Admin Office lobby and on the Irwin County government website at least 5 days before each meeting, agendas for special called meetings at least 24 hours before.
- Irwin County Board of Commissioners
  - Typically meets on the first Monday of every month at 6:00pm in the County Admin Office, but occasional Noon meetings occur. Relocation to the Irwin County Courtroom is under consideration once it becomes equipped for livestreaming.
  - Posts agendas and calls for special meetings on the County Admin Office front door at least 24 hours before each meeting.
- Ocilla City Council
  - Typically meets on the third Monday of every month at 6:00pm in the Ocilla Municipal Building.
- Irwin-Ocilla Industrial Development Authority / Chamber of Commerce
  - Typically meets on the first Wednesday of every month at 5:30pm.
  - Time and Location varies, call to confirm.

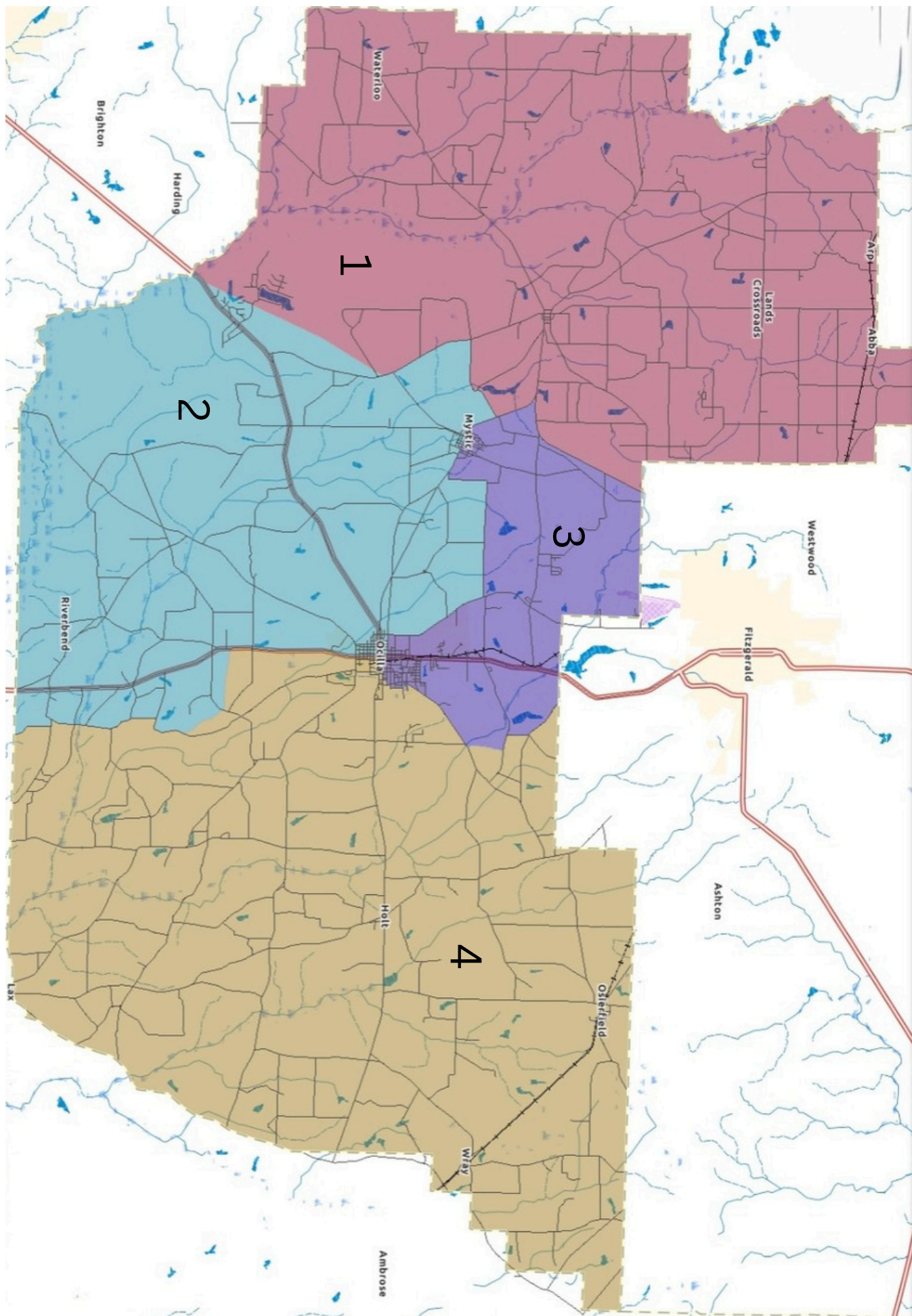


## Local Board, Commission and Community Meetings Pt. 2

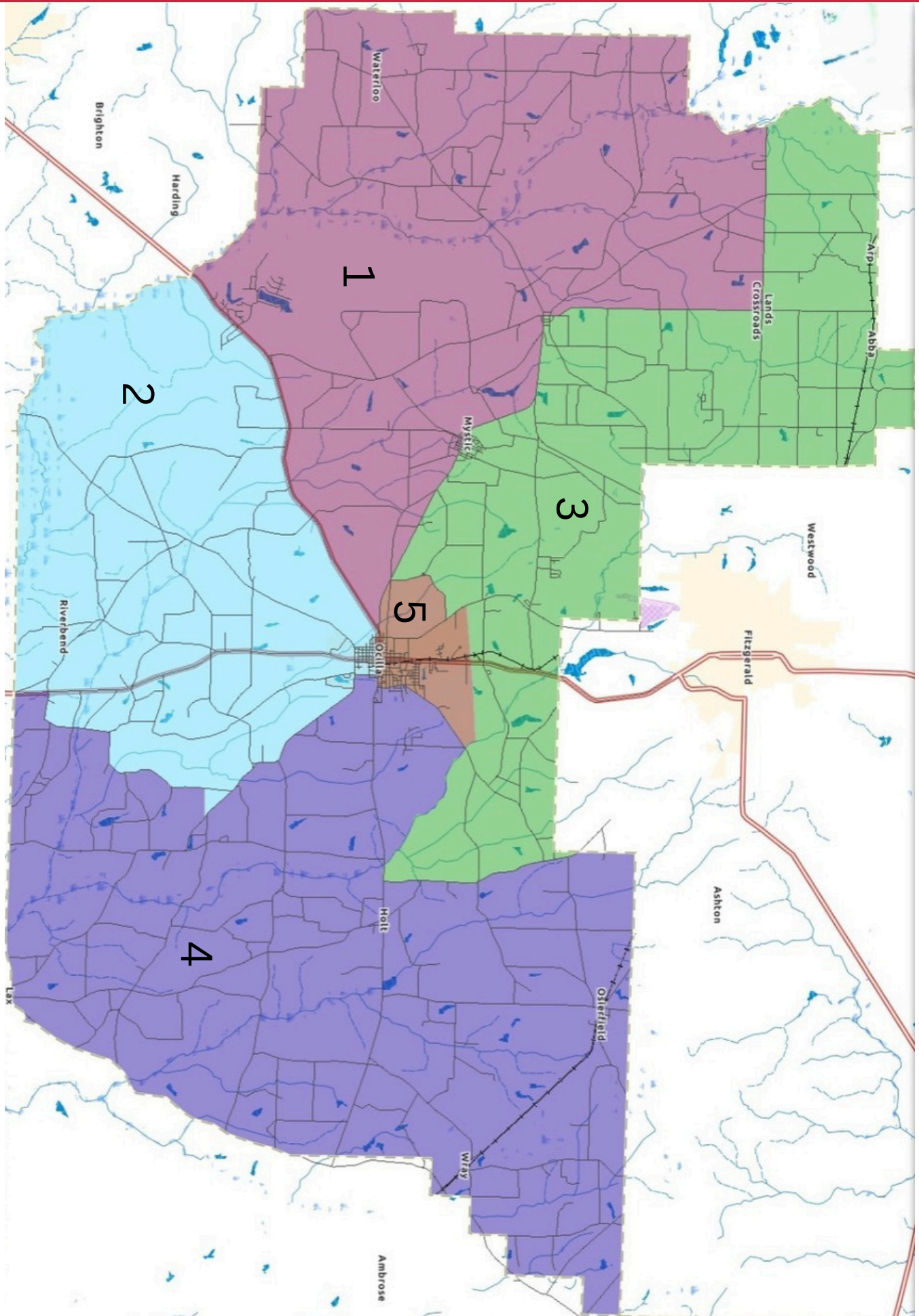
- Irwin County Board of Education
  - The Irwin County Board of Education normally meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Irwin County Conference Center.
  - Public Commenters must be on the agenda to address the board.
    - To see the rules of conduct and public participation procedures and to complete the public comment request form, see the following website:
      - [www.irwin.k12.ga.us/page/board-of-education](http://www.irwin.k12.ga.us/page/board-of-education)
- Ocilla Housing Authority
  - Meets at the Ocilla Housing Authority Admin Office quarterly at 11am.
    - For more information, visit the following website:
      - [www.ocillapha.com/board-of-commissioners.html](http://www.ocillapha.com/board-of-commissioners.html)
- Irwin County Leadership Development Academy
  - Typically meets on the third Saturday of the month at 10am in the Ocilla Community House.
  - Advertises meetings and topics covered in the Ocilla Star.
- Festivals
  - Dave Prater Music Fest
    - Typically held on the first or second Thursday-Saturday in May each year in the Ocilla Historic Schoolyard.
  - Sweet Potato Festival
    - Last Saturday in October each year at 10am in the Ocilla Historic Schoolyard.
  - Irwinville Fall Festival
    - First Saturday in November each year at 9am at the Irwinville Community Center.



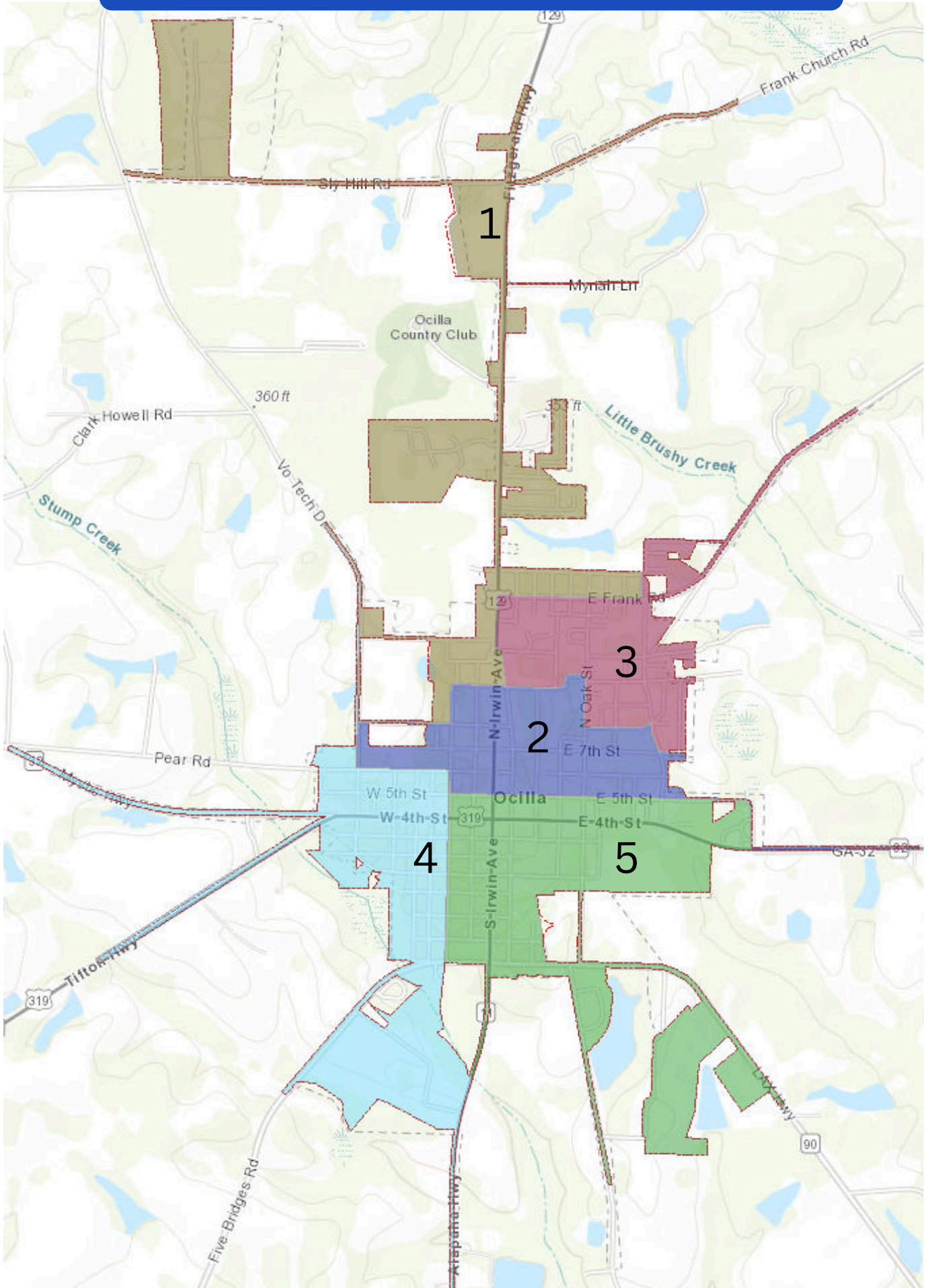
# IRWIN COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT MAP AS OF 2022



# IRWIN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT MAP AS OF 2022



CITY OF OCILLA CITY COUNCIL MAP AS OF 2022



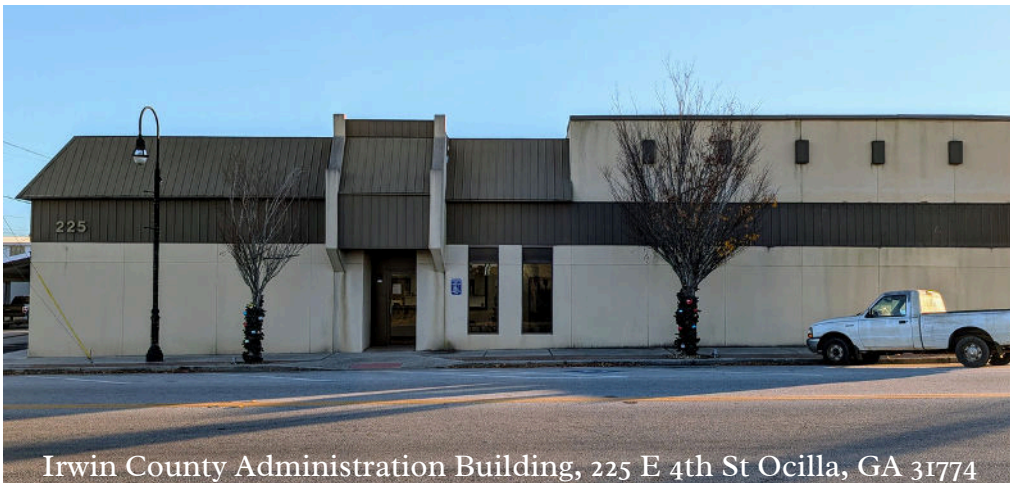
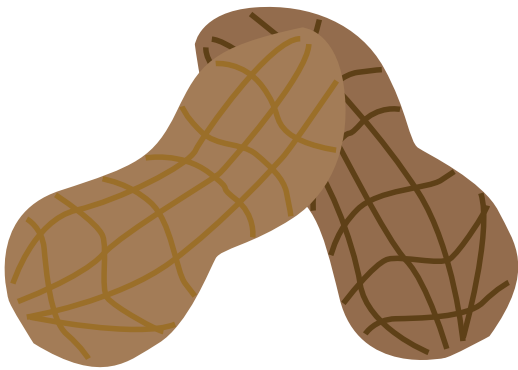
## Important Irwin County and City of Ocilla Contacts

- Administration.....229-468-944I
- Building Inspector.....229-468-5514
- Clerk of Superior Court.....229-468-5356
- Clerk of Juvenile Court.....229-468-5356
- County Commissioners.....229-468-944I
- Cooperative Extension Office.....229-468-7409
- Coroner.....229-425-7379
- County Clerk.....229-468-944I
- Deputy Coroner.....229-424-4103
- Elections.....229-468-008I
- EMA/EMS.....229-468-9594
- Finance Director.....229-468-944I
- Health Department.....229-238-9540
- Magistrate Court.....229-468-767I
- Mystic Water.....229-468-944I
- Probate Court.....229-468-5138
- Recreation Department.....229-468-944I
- Road Department / Solid Waste.....229-468-5317
- Senior Citizen Center.....229-468-918I
- Sheriff.....229-468-7459
- Tax Assessor.....229-468-5514
- Tax Commissioner / Tag Office.....229-468-5505
- Irwin County / City of Ocilla Zoning Department.....229-468-5514
- Ocilla City Hall.....229-468-514I
- Ocilla City Clerk.....229-468-9835
- Ocilla Code Enforcement.....229-468-514I
- Ocilla Fire Chief.....229-468-9663
- Ocilla Municipal Court Clerk.....229-468-3438
- Ocilla Police Chief.....229-468-7494
- Ocilla Public Works.....229-468-5395
- Ocilla-Irwin Chamber of Commerce.....229-468-9114
- Ocilla Post Office.....229-468-9928
- Mystic Post Office.....229-468-4264
- Irwin County Website.....[www.irwincounty-ga.gov](http://www.irwincounty-ga.gov)
- City of Ocilla Website.....[www.cityofocillaga.net](http://www.cityofocillaga.net)

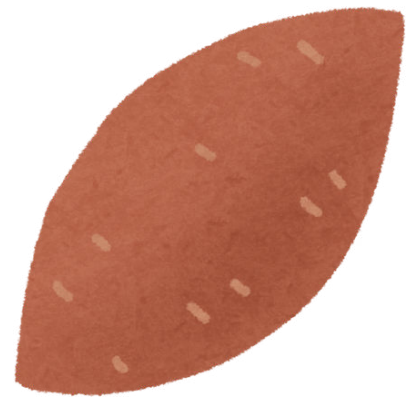


Irwin County Courthouse, 301 S Irwin Ave Ocilla, GA 31774

Irwinville Community Center, 1 Co Rd 302 Fitzgerald, GA 31750



Irwin County Administration Building, 225 E 4th St Ocilla, GA 31774



Irwin County Board of Elections  
225 East Fourth Street  
Ocilla, Georgia 31774



**THIS VOTER INFORMATION GUIDE IS PRODUCED FOR THE VOTERS OF IRWIN COUNTY BY THE IRWIN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND REGISTRATIONS AND ITS STAFF**

