



# **Business License Process Update**

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**Columbus Consolidated Government**

October 31, 2023



# Topics of Discussion

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## 01. Renewal Deadline Extensions

License renewal due date has been extended for the last 4 years.

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## 03. Software Issues

Implementation of new licensing software.

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## 02. Staffing Challenges

Retention of experienced employees.

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## 04. Compliance Notices

Delay of courtesy non-compliance notifications.



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## 05. What's next

Steps taken to address concerns.

# 01. Renewal Deadline Extensions



- Extension of license renewal due dates for the past 4 years has negatively impacted business license processing.
  - 2020, 2021, 2022 - Due date was extended to June 1<sup>st</sup> (normally April 1<sup>st</sup>)
  - 2023 - Due date was extended to May 1<sup>st</sup> (normally April 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Typically takes 4-5 months to complete renewal processing after deadline.
- Businesses tend to wait until the deadline to renew, mostly by mail.
- Extended deadlines creates a shorter window for staff to finish current renewals before the next renewal cycle begins.

## 02. Staffing Challenges



- There are 6 approved/budgeted positions in the Occupational Tax Section (excluding the Revenue Division Manager). From January 2020 to October 2023, the vacancy rate by position is as follows:
  - Licensing & Tax Supervisor – 30%
  - Revenue Auditor – 28%
  - Revenue Auditor – 26%
  - Licensing & Tax Clerk – 48%
  - Licensing & Tax Clerk – 0%
  - Licensing & Tax Clerk – 0%
- Inconsistent staffing levels and inexperienced staff has slowed down efficiency with processing licenses and renewals.
- COVID-19 exposure/quarantine guidelines has had some impact to the normal annual processes.
- Established operational procedures/policy not consistently followed.

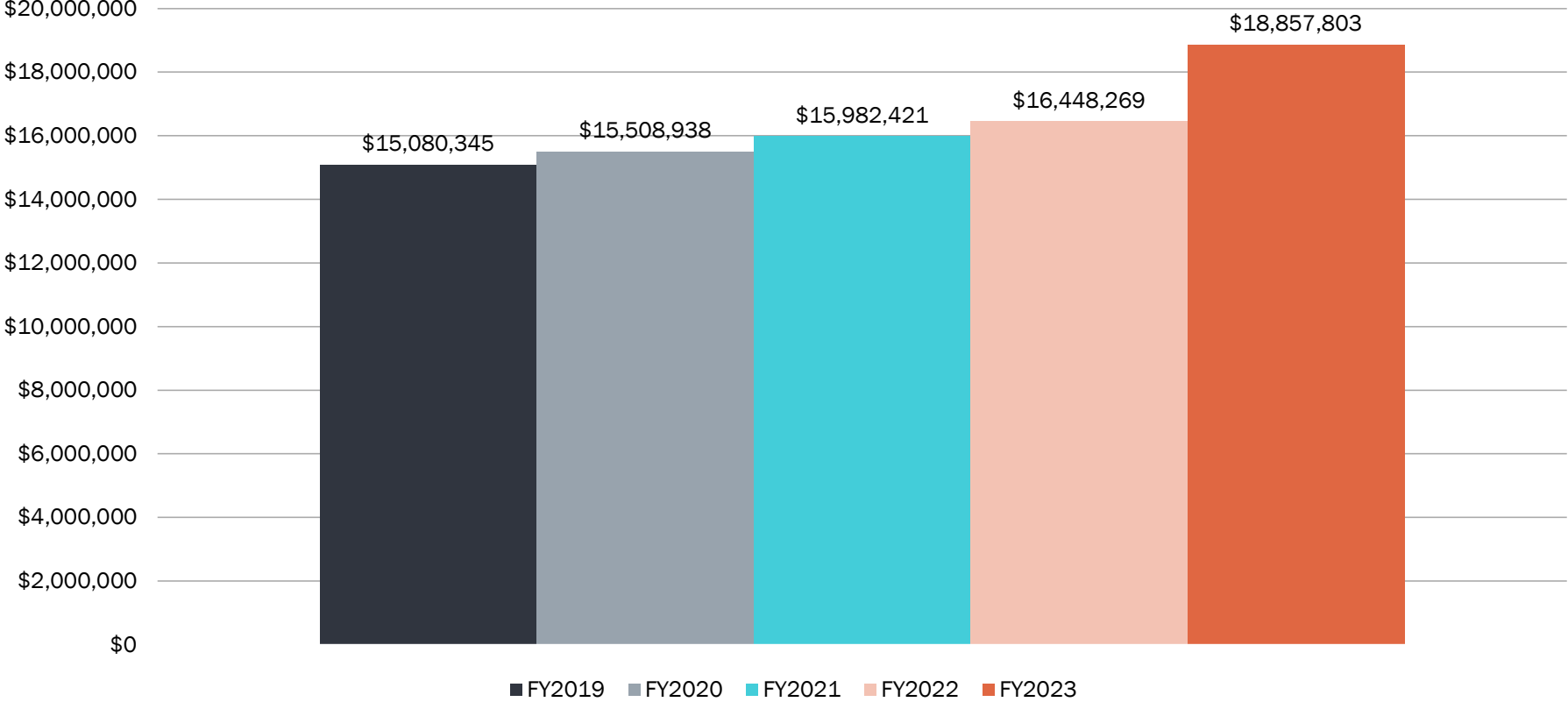


# Last 5 Fiscal Years



# Year-over-Year Occupational Tax Revenue

(Deposited and Recorded)



## 03. Software Issues



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- New business licensing software was implemented in April 2021.
  - Software will support online processing of license renewals and other tax remittances.
- Productivity has decreased post-migration due to system performance issues such as extensive buffering and requiring more steps to complete processing of a license.
- I.T. has been working with the software vendor regarding our performance issues, but to fix some of the issues requires another upgrade.
- I.T., Finance, and the software vendor are engaged in preliminary discussions regarding the next upgrade.

## 04. Compliance Notices



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- As part of annual processes, the Revenue Division typically sends a courtesy delinquent notice to businesses who have failed to submit license renewals for the current year.
  - If businesses do not respond to the notice, a delinquent list is provided to Code Enforcement.
  - Code Enforcement checks to see if the business is still operating in its specified location and if so, they typically issue a warning citation to compel code compliance. Non-compliance may result in a court citation.
    - Code Enforcement has no jurisdiction outside of Muscogee County.
  - Courtesy delinquent notifications for 2020, 2021, and 2022 were not mailed until August 2023 along with 2023 notices. However, businesses are still
- 8 responsible for obtaining a license annually.



# Renew by date and expiration date are printed on every license.

Occupation Tax License			THIS RECEIPT NOT OFFICIAL UNLESS VALIDATED		
City of Columbus, Georgia			PAID		
Date Issued:	Fee Type	Revenue Code	Fee Amount	Mar 24 2023	
<del>March 24, 2023</del>	Occupation Tax Administrative Fee	4140	\$75.00	Occupation Tax Columbus Consolidated Government	
<b>Expires: December 31, 2023</b>					
<b>Renew by: April 01, 2024</b>					
Occupational Tax#: OCC000000-03-2023			C.O. #: CO-03-23-0000		
Account #: 0000000-03-2023					
<b>Business Address:</b> ANY BUSINESS INC 1234 MAIN STREET  COLUMBUS, GA 31909			<b>Mailing Address:</b> ANY BUSINESS INC. ATTN: JOHN Q PUBLIC 1234 MAIN STREET COLUMBUS, GA 31909		
Business Name: <u>ANY BUSINESS INC</u>					
Type of Occupation: <u>TIRE DEALERS</u>					

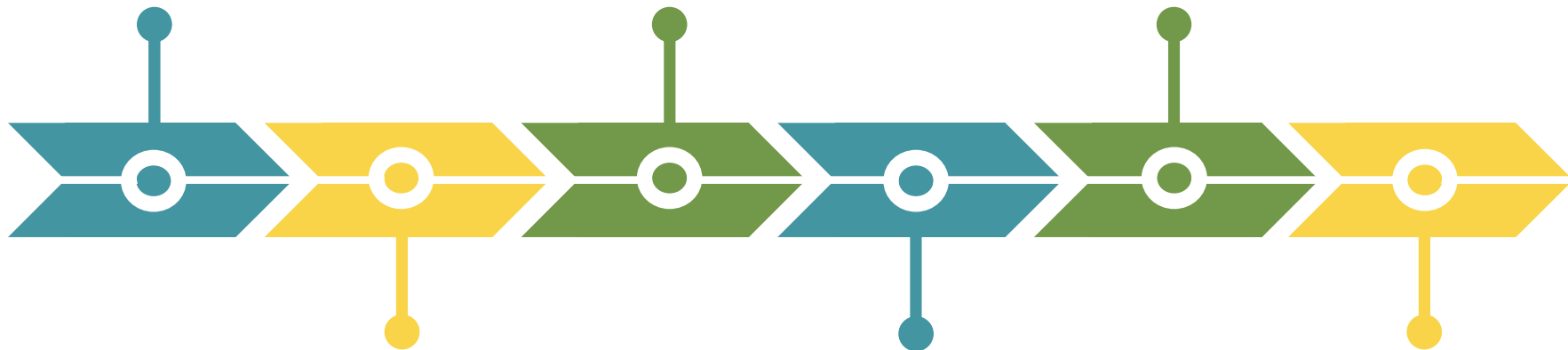
**Sec 19-36(a):** License required. For the year 1996 and succeeding years thereafter, each person engaged in any business, trade, profession or occupation in Columbus, Georgia (whether with a location in Columbus, Georgia, or in the case of an out-of-state business with no location in Georgia exerting substantial efforts within the state pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 48-13-7), shall register and take out a license for said business, trade, profession, or occupation, which license shall be displayed in a conspicuous place in the place of business.

# Timeline

07/25/2023  
**Referral made by Councilor Thomas requested a report on business licenses**

08/07/2023  
**Initial delinquent lists for 2020, 2021, 2022, & 2023 were provided**

08/22/2023  
**Response to referral provided**



07/27/2023  
**DCM Hodge sent an email to Finance requesting a status update on licenses**

08/07/23 - 10/30/23  
**City Manager weekly updates to provide status processed and delinquent accounts**

08/22/2023  
**City Manager denied opportunity to provide an update to Council on business license issues**

## 05. What's Next?



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- Non-compliance letters for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 were mailed out.
- Delinquent business listing has been turned over to Code Enforcement.
- Finance will continue to work overtime to complete pending license renewals. Code Enforcement has been authorized to work overtime to work through the delinquent list for non-compliance.
- City Manager has also authorized temporary staff to assist with simple routine tasks such as answering/returning calls, filing, and processing mail to allow experienced staff to focus on license processing.
- I.T and Finance staff will continue engagement with software vendor regarding the next software upgrade with the goal of implementing online processing by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter in 2024.



**Questions?**

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