



THE ASSESSMENT FILES

COUNTY ASSESSORS ASSOCIATION OF OKLAHOMA

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NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

HELLO ASSESSORS AND DEPUTIES,

MARCH 15TH HAS COME AND GONE! IT'S THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN WE'RE PRESSED TO MEET ALL SORTS OF DEADLINES, MAIL OUT INCREASE NOTICES, AND ADJUST OUR ASSESSMENT PROCESS TO MEET THE EVER CHANGING AD VALOREM SYSTEM. IT SPEAKS WELL OF THE ASSESSORS AND DEPUTIES BECAUSE WE ALWAYS MANAGE TO GET OUR WORK DONE BY THE SCHEDULED TIME DESPITE ALL THE CHANGES AND OBSTACLES THROWN OUR WAY.

I HOPE EVERYONE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SOAK UP SOME OF THE MUCH NEEDED MOISTURE POURED OUT ON OUR STATE THIS PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS. MAJOR COUNTY WAS BLESSED TO RECEIVE AT LEAST 1 1/2 TO 3" OF RAIN, AND ON TOP OF THAT WE GOT AN INCH OF BEAUTIFUL SNOW.

DON'T FORGET TO KEEP YOURSELVES INFORMED ABOUT LEGISLATION AFFECTING COUNTY GOVERNMENT. AS ALWAYS, THERE ARE STILL SOME ISSUES OUT THERE WE ARE WATCHING. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF LEGISLATION, YOU CAN CONTACT OUR "WATCH DOGS" ON THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE. THEY ARE JIM KELLEY, GAIL HEDGCOTH, KEN YAZEL, DEBBIE COLLINS, AND WADE PATTERSON. THEY DO AN EXCELLENT JOB KEEPING US INFORMED.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT DAY AT THE CAPITOL IS SCHEDULED FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5TH. HOPE TO SEE SOME OF YOU THERE!

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Ralph Wilson

PRESIDENT, ASSESSORS ASSOCIATION OF OKLAHOMA

Ad Valorem Update

We've come up with a new definition of March Madness. It's not the terrible wild fires faced in so many counties or the NCCAA basketball tournament but the many challenges of another busy homestead exemption filing period, particularly the new veterans' exemption filing. Everyone is happy to assist with this new program, but we've had to overcome lots of questions in making it work.

As promised, we'll be conducting a survey on the new program right after March 15. Thanks in advance and watch for it in your mailbox. We're hoping to get some results compiled and available for the Legislature as they consider adoption of any other measures in this area.

Special thanks to everyone for helping Teresa Strawther with the information on millage levies for each county and the Form 993. Everyone has gotten the hang of these forms and it really helps us with questions we get from Legislative staff on the condition of the ad valorem system. Thanks especially since Teresa's a lifelong fan of a football team south of the Red River.

The Ad Valorem Division is also issuing a Bulletin on the reporting of the Veteran's exemption so we can get a handle on the final numbers in time for Abstracts later this year. The Bulletin, which the 4-C Committee worked on, should answer most of the questions on reporting. Debbie Gentry, 4-C Chair, requested some clarification on the issue and we appreciate her leadership on that committee.

Public service court cases are proceeding. We'll keep everyone up-to-date on that situation. We are expecting to gear up for public service valuations. We've had lots of calls and questions about renditions as everyone prepares for the next couple of busy months.

The Legislature has under consideration a number of ad valorem bills. Many are significant for the system, but nothing is certain this early. As the session proceeds, many of the ad valorem bills are still making their way through the legislative process.

Reminder from last month's newsletter, we have a complete schedule now of the 2006 District and meeting dates:

OATR May 4th and 5th (Tulsa)
 Northeast: May 5 (Tulsa County)
 Southeast: May 12 (Bryan County)
 Northwest May 19 (Harper County)
 Southwest: May 26 (Cleveland County)

Free stuff!! We have two items mentioned in last month's newsletter: Free copies of the ad valorem statutes on a CD. If you don't have one, let us know. Also a reminder that, we will have DVD copies of the new aerial photographs available at the District meetings in May. (Keep in mind that the May meetings are required.) There's an article in this newsletter on the content and quality of these aerials. They are a good product and the price is good. See Troy Frazier for details.

Thanks to everyone for their help on the various legislative surveys. We appreciate the hard work and conscientious effort of all county assessors and deputies out there. We hope that everyone's work helps improve the Oklahoma ad valorem system and make it better than it was given to us for taxpayers everywhere. Like Tom Cusack says, "keep in mind, we should be the guardian of fairness. Watch out for the Dragons in the uncharted waters.

Jeff Spelman, CAE
 Director, Ad Valorem Division

P.S.: "Never grow a wishbone, daughter, where your backbone ought to be." Anwar Caddo. World famous Ad Valorem Philosopher quote borrowed from Clementine Paddleford.

Reporter's Notes

For several years I have tried to educate the public about a trend that many cities across Oklahoma seem to be following. The cities are placing judgments on the taxroll at an alarming rate. Everything from workers compensation claims to large condemnations are being funded by placing the judgments on the property taxes. I urge every assessor to study you sinking fund millages and discover what is currently being paid for by property taxes; I think you might be shocked.

The following article appeared in the Enid News and Eagle, and deals with this very issue. As Jewett Farley always says "don't argue with people that buy ink by the barrel". However, as you can see, the news media can be a great asset and a good friend.

We have to applaud Garfield County Assessor Wade Patterson's tenacity in calling to taxpayer's attention every time the city of Enid applies city judgments to the tax rolls.

Patterson was at the Enid City Commission meeting again last week taking the commission to task for placing \$640,000 on the tax rolls for a settlement the city made with KM Properties over the price of property condemned for a water retention project in 2002.

The practice often is used by cities and encouraged by the Oklahoma Municipal League, and it allows cities to use this sinking fund option in instances where they may be hit with large unbudgeted settlements. Patterson alerted the commission — and the taxpayers as well — the KM Properties settlement is the largest ever put on Garfield County tax rolls and it is akin to a property tax increase.

By putting the judgment on the tax rolls, the city would be able to borrow money from a bank and pay off the judgment. The bank then would collect the amount of the judgment plus interest.

The city has used this option many times, from paying for workers' compensation settlements, to paying for a parasailing park for Vance to paying this large settlement. Patterson said in the last nine years, the sinking fund levy has risen from .74 mills to 3.48 mills if the KM Properties judgment is placed there.

Patterson is right the city should not use this sinking fund option indiscriminately. He scolded the city commission for what he considered overusing this option, particularly during former city manager Bill Gamble's tenure.

We're concerned the city was far below what it offered KM Properties to begin with than what was settled for. The city originally had offered \$178,992 for the property, but eventually settled on \$818,972. It's that difference property owners will now have to pay. This large discrepancy in an offer and what apparently is fair market value doesn't generate a whole lot of confidence in the city's financial capabilities.

While we understand the need to have the sinking fund option, city administrators must be careful about what they're doing when it comes to settlements like this. This kind of large, unforeseen judgment is what the sinking fund is intended for; however, city commissioners need to be aware just what these kinds of decisions do to the property tax owners of Enid.

I think this article hit home. I received many phone calls and comments since this article. As I always say, "The best part of being a public servant is serving the public"

If you would like to receive updates on legislation, please contact Jerry Stone with the Oklahoma County Treasurer's Office at JERSTO@oklahomacounty.org .

lwade@garfieldcountymail.com phone 580-237-0220 fax 580-249-5989.

God Bless,

Wade

2006 Legislative Session Update

I just wanted to give you a brief update on the legislative process to this point.

We are just about in the middle of the process. Bills which passed in the House of Representatives are now in the Senate, and bills which passed from the Senate are in House of Representatives. All bills must be assigned to a committee on the proper legislative side before they can be heard on the floor of that legislative body.

Once assigned to a committee, the bill must go through the committee process again. If a bill is not assigned to a committee, it is “most likely” dead for this legislative session. I say “most likely” because an amendment to the legislation can still be added somewhere down the line. This can be good or bad, depending on the situation. But for sure, this is where we must watch the process very carefully. Things start to happen very rapidly towards the end of the session.

I sent an email, fax, or letter to everyone last week which contains the legislation we are still tracking. It appears that we are down to approximately 18 bills. Some are bills we support and others are bills we oppose. If you did not receive the transmission, please contact me, and I will make sure you get it ASAP. If you know of a bill that is not listed, please let me know.

It is so important that everyone keep in close contact with our legislators. If you have the opportunity, take them to breakfast, lunch, or dinner. I know of several counties that have started the tradition of a Legislative Breakfast with their legislators. These meetings can take place back home or in Oklahoma City, which ever you prefer. These meetings provide the perfect opportunity to bring you legislators up to speed on county issues. Remember, you are the experts your legislators depend on when it comes to county government.

Dave Herbert is always willing to help with legislators or legislation. Dave can be reached at dherbert@logixonline.com or by phone at (405)733-3345.

You can contact your legislative committee members for updates as well. Your legislative committee is Gail Hedgcoth, Ken Yazel, Debbie Collins, Wade Patterson, and myself.

Sincerely,

Jim Kelley
jimkelley46@yahoo.com



April Birthdays

Jackie Gooch (Logan)	April 5
Debbie Croasdale (Marshall)	April 19
Debbie Gentry (Woodward)	April 23
Jacque Rose (Payne)	April 23
Evelyn Bradley (Garvin)	April 26
Eugenia Wood (Johnston)	April 29

IAAO Update

Your Oklahoma IAAO Chapter is continuing to rise to the occasion by sponsoring 2 IAAO courses in Oklahoma this year. The response has been great! We expect the classes to fill up, so one needs to pre-register while there's still time. We will then establish a waiting list on a first-sign-up basis.

Course 101- Fundamentals of Real Property Appraisal will be June 26-30, 2006, in Oklahoma City. Course 102- Income Approach to Valuation will be July 17-21, 2006, in Tulsa.

This is a great time to be an IAAO member! Why don't you join? Contact me at Monica@alvaok.net.

Sincerely,

Monica Schmidt
Woods County Assessor
2006 Oklahoma IAAO President

OSU/CLGT Upcoming Course Schedule

Last Friday, March 24, 2005, the Commission on Government Personnel Education and Training met at the Oklahoma County Courthouse. The purpose of the meeting was to allow the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) present their transition plan of the County Training Program. The OCES plan calls for transferring all administrative functions of the training program to begin on July 1, 2006. The plan includes transferring the Assessor Accreditation program UNLESS the Assessors are successful in securing funding separate from the County Training Program. Separate funding would allow the Assessors to remain with the Center for Local Government Technology. An agenda item of the meeting was for the Assessors to speak and Wade Patterson stated that the Assessors were in the process of securing funding for the accreditation program and the program should remain at CLGT as stated in the statutes.

The Commission will meet next by June 15 to determine if the Assessors are successful in obtaining funding for the accreditation program and if so the program will remain with CLGT.

If anyone has any questions concerning this issue, feel free to call us. Better yet, don't forget to talk to your legislator.

Sincerely,

Gary and Doug

Unit 3 (Mass Appraisal)	April 18-21	Tulsa
Unit 4 (Income Approach)	May 8-11	Tulsa
Unit 5 (Business Personal)	May 23-25	Western Hills
Unit 7 (Ag. Land Valuation)	June 8-9	Tahlequah
Unit 6 (Cadastral Mapping)	June 19-22	Tahlequah
IAAO Unit 101 (Real Property)	June 26-30	Oklahoma City
IAAO Unit 102 (Income)	July 17-21	Tulsa

You can download the registration forms on line at <http://clgt.okstate.edu> and email it to clgt@okstate.edu or you can fax the form to 405-744-7268. If you have any questions please contact Doug Warr or Gary Snyder at 405-744-6049.