

A PEEK INSIDE THE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Issue 6

April 2016

ERIE COUNTY AUDITOR NEWSLETTER

A side note from our Auditor

We completed the Triennial Statistical update on time. The State Department of Tax Equalization gave us directions to adjust values across the county as follows: -2.7% on residential parcels, 25.09% on agricultural parcels, 3.63% for industrial parcels and 2.61% on commercial parcels. We adjusted all neighborhoods, both increases and decreases, where sales statistics indicated a need.

The accounting staff did a tremendous job meeting the mandates of the Affordable Health Care Act and issued the mandated forms 1094-1095 on time and containing the information required by the legislation. Robin Reed, Brenda Hurst and Sue Kane, job well done. In addition to the AHCA reporting requirements we also issued the W-2's and the 1099's to all the vendors well in advance of the IRS deadline, kudos to Tammy Sennish and Jean Siesel. We are currently in the process of getting contracts and work schedules in place for the 2018 Property Revaluation, mandated by State Statute. Our process this time will include a paperless reappraisal system and as a result we bid the contract to accomplish this task. For the first time since 1979 we will be utilizing a new appraisal compa-

ny- John G. Cleminshaw, Inc. We will continue to maintain relations with the current appraisal company, Appraisal Research Corporation. We appreciate their relationship over the years and thank them for their commitment to Erie County. The Auditor of State's Staff has begun the audit of the 2015 Financial Results. This will be a new experience for us, since we have been using, by directive of Auditor Dave Yost, an independent public account firm, Rea and Associates of New Philadelphia. We appreciate the job they have done for our county, and recently received the "cleanest" Audit in recent memory. We can credit all employees in the County who deal with financial records, payroll, accounts payable and purchasing. This was a tremendous effort and showcases that sound, internal control practices were adhered to and that employees protected the assets of the County entrusted to their care. Our GIS Department was asked to consider making a presentation at the National Conference of the International Association of Assessing Officers in August. We are currently waiting to hear whether we will be included in the final list of presenters. It is a tremendous honor to be recognized by your peers and our GIS Coordinator, Mark Wroblewski, is doing an



Richard Jeffrey

outstanding job using technology to help us work smarter. Erie County is light years ahead of most of the State in that regard thanks to the efforts of Mr. Wroblewski.



State Audit Results

The County's audit of the 2014 financial statements was released October 8, 2015 by the State Auditor's Office. The Accounting firm of Rea & Associates, Inc. performed the work and submitted the audit to the State Auditor for approval before release. The County maintains their records on the cash basis of accounting during the year and hires Local Government Services, a separate division in the State Auditor's Office, to convert the records to the accrual basis in accordance with Government Accounting Standards.

The results of the 2014 audit were very encouraging for the County. For the first time in a while there were no major adjustments, no major non-compliance with Ohio or Federal laws and no significant weakness in Internal Controls over County processes. There was a management letter issued which is a separate document from the audit report. This letter contained one minor noncompliance issue and seven minor recommendations for improvement. The County has corrected or has plans to correct all of the management letter comments.

Inside this issue:

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- Staff Spotlights
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Heather Walters

Heather is a lifelong resident of Bellevue where she graduated from Bellevue Senior High School in 1987. She is the proud mother of Alexis, a senior at Kent State University. She will be graduating this summer with dual degrees in Broadcast Journalism and Public Communications. Being that Heather is also an avid animal lover, she is "mom" to her 11 year old golden retriever Tanner and 2 rescue cats, Baby and Scotch. She began her public service career as the Director of Huron County

Staff Spotlight

Board of Elections in 1996 and then took a position closer to home in 2003 as Payroll Clerk for the City of Bellevue. In 2008 Heather started working for the Erie County Auditor's Office. As a Real Estate Clerk, some of her responsibilities include the Board of Revision, Special Assessments, Hotel Lodging Tax, Exemptions and Estate Tax. Staying active in the community is 1 of her passions which is evident through her involvement with local organizations such as Leader-

ship of Erie County, from which she graduated in 2011. For the past 10 years Heather has been the Entertainment Chair of the Bellevue Community Days Festival. In addition she has been a lifetime member of the Bellevue Society for the Arts, serving on the Board of Trustees for over 8 years. She also enjoys performing in local theater productions and just last year made her debut as Director of the BSA Children's Theater production of "Dr. Doolittle".



Lisa Joiner

I am a lifelong resident of Erie County, being born in Sandusky and raised in Margaretta Township and I graduated from Margaretta High School. I began working in the Erie County Auditor's Office for the Real Estate Division in 2005. My responsibilities include but are not limited to the transferring of deeds, sketching the buildings for both residential and commercial

Staff Spotlight

parcels, updating valuations and tax bills associated with destroyed property and new construction. Currently my focus is for the first phase of the paperless reappraisal in which I verify that all of the information for each parcel matches exactly what sits on that property. This will ensure that every tax bill is true to form. I am the lucky mom to 3 beautiful children, Ben,

Sam and Aubree. They keep me very busy! We enjoy going to the beach and relaxing, especially if a vacation is involved! Having a job that you love and enjoy makes it a little easier to leave my kiddos every morning, especially when I know there will be coffee involved!

"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

Harry S. Truman

New Qualifications for Veterans Homestead Exemption

New Homestead Exemption qualifications for veterans disability will be effective March 23, 2016. Veterans will qualify if they were discharged from active duty under honorable conditions and their compensation rating is based on individual unemployability, often referred to as "IU". Previously disabled veterans qualified ONLY if their total service connected rating was 100%, however it has been expanded to

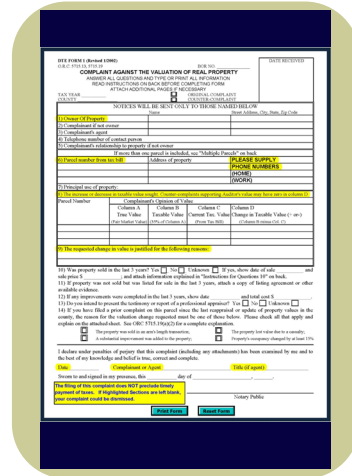
include total compensation rating of 100%. Applications for tax year 2016 and late applications for 2015 will qualify if they present the following 2 pieces of documentation:

1. Letter from the VA stating that their application for the status of "IU" has been granted and
2. A copy of DD214 (discharge form) to establish eligibility under the new law.

BOR Process and Deadlines

When filing a complaint, the taxpayer assumes the burden of providing adequate evidence showing that the Auditor's appraised value is not indicative of the true market value. Recent arm's length sales, fee appraisals, and documented comparable properties are types of evidence the Board of Revision will consider. They will not consider unsupported opinions of value or unsupported statements of opinion, national statistics, or statewide statistics, etc. The Board re-

views evidence, listens to testimony at the hearings, and personally views each of the parcels that are the subject of the complaint(s). Once the Board makes their final decision, the complainants have 30 days to file an appeal with either the Erie Common Pleas Court or with the Ohio Board of Tax Appeals if they do not agree with the local BOR decision. The deadline to file an original BOR complaint is March 31 of that current year.



Weights & Measures Update

There has been some recent concern and media coverage on the "skimmers" being discovered in the gas station pump credit card readers. The most important thing we can publish is that the public **not** panic, rest assure we are on the lookout and that Erie County has not uncovered any skimmers! Our Weights and Measures Inspector, Jeff Fantozzi, is working diligently with Registered Service Companies in

our county to help inspect for these skimmers, without having to interrupt the complex workings of today's computerized dispensers. Erie County Auditor, Rick Jeffery, along with several other N.W. jurisdictions are looking into a day of training on skimmers with a Registered Service Company and authorities who have already uncovered these devices. If you do suspect a skimmer contact a station manager who

then should contact their station service technician along with the Weights and Measures Inspector. Here are a couple of tips:

- Since these are blue-tooth skimmers, use your cell phone to see if there is any odd blue tooth devices in the area
- If in doubt, compare the card reader to other card readers at same station.

"Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work."

Vince Lombardi



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Upcoming deadlines

April 11	BOR hearings start
June 01	Homestead due

Please refer to our full website for any and all important deadlines pertaining to the Erie County Auditor's Office.

Note that we also have a levy calculator available on our website.

Those who stay away from the election think that one vote will do no good. 'Tis but one step more to think one vote will do no harm.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



We're on the Web!

www.erie.iviewauditor.com

Implementation Teams

The I-Team planned 3 different team building events. The first was a Halloween Chili Cook-Off with the Recorders Office and the Treasurer's Office. This also included an optional costume party. We had 6 different chili's entered and Heather Walters from the Auditor's office took home bragging rights. We also teamed up with the Treasurer's Office for an Ugly Christmas Sweater contest, and Samantha Stewart from the Treasurer's Office took home the gold as the Christmas Tree!

