



The Assessment Review



SOA Making Information More Accessible



The Supervisor of Assessments Office is working hard to make assessment information as accessible as possible. And with advances in technology, taxpayers have more information available to them than ever before. From the PowerPoint presentations we use for tax forums to search options on our Web site, technology has allowed us to disseminate information in faster and more effective ways, making the assessment process more transparent and allowing us to keep in touch with taxpayers and assessors.

Inside this issue:

- Production Report* 2
- Ask Rhonda!*
- Assessor Links to Treasurer*
- Web site*
- Mass Informational Mailing* 3
- Targets Seniors*
- Employee Spotlight* 4

Our Web site, launched in 2005, has been a valuable tool for taxpayers, title searchers, and others interested in parcel information. Last year, the Web site had about 70,000 visitors with people from as far away as Israel and China accessing the site. And according to current data, many people are using the site during the evening, with a surprising level of activity occurring between 1:00 AM and 3:00 AM. Of course, we're constantly adding new features to the site. For instance, where it was once only possible to search for specific property addresses, it is now possible to search at the neighborhood level. In addition, we've added several links to other county sites—the most recent of which links to the treasurer's Web site.

Along with our Web site, we've also made upgrades to Pictometry, adding online capabilities for assessors who do not have in-office installations. Pictometry aides in the assessment process by providing assessors with three-dimensional view of land parcels, and now assessors can log on from any computer anywhere and search for properties and images with a scaled-down version of the full office application.

Even something as simple as E-mail can have a big impact on our ability to stay in touch with taxpayers. I have received many e-mails—some angry, some complimentary—from residents all over the county. But because E-mail is so easy and convenient, I am able to give my full attention to each individual taxpayer and personally answer each one.

At the Assessor's Office, we're always thinking of better ways to use technology to the advantage of Will County taxpayers. And it will continue to be our goal to find the best ways for taxpayers, assessors, and others to get the information they need from us, whether they visit our office or surf our Web site while sitting at home in their pajamas. Now that's progress!

**We've Got
Answers for
Will County
Seniors!**

**Join us at a
Senior Event
this April or
May!**

**For a complete list
of events, go to:
www.willcountysoa.com**

Production Report

Documents Processed	December 2007	December 2008	April 2009
Parcel Count	265,209	270,755	271,432
B of R Final Assessed Value	22,062,398,112	23,547,911,612	23,547,911,612
Name/Address Changes	59,039	39,949	8,601
Subdivisions/Condos	196	132	59
Divisions/Consolidations	670	511	517
Tax Parcels Added	8,472	---	1,267
Tax Parcels Deleted	1,392	---	590
Real Estate Transfer Declarations	15,041	9,894	1,540
Senior Freeze Exemption Applications	10,875	11,528	11,744
Certificates of Error	1,962	3,476	172
Property Tax Appeal Board Filings	162	181	0 for 2008/229 for 2007

Ask Rhonda!



Question: I made some improvements on my property. Do I qualify for an exemption?

It depends. The Homestead Improvement Exemption is for new improvements to existing structures on homestead property or the rebuilding of residential structures following a catastrophic event.

The exemption is limited to a maximum of \$75,000 per year in fair cash value and continues for four years from the date the improvement or rebuilding is completed and occupied, not the date you file this application.

Any repair work performed to prolong or maintain the condition of an existing structure does not qualify for this exemption.

You can apply for the exemption with your township assessor. If you qualify, your assessor will file the appropriate paperwork with our office.

If you have an assessment question, e-mail Rhonda at rnovak@willcountyillinois.com.

Assessor Links in to Treasurer Web site

In an effort to provide more convenient access to property-tax information, the Will County Supervisor of Assessments Office has established a link from its Web site to the Will County Treasurer's Web site. Taxpayers can now view assessment information along with related tax bill information with one click of the mouse.



The treasurer's site provides taxpayers with the most current tax bill information, including tax rates, installment amounts, and payment dates. The site allows taxpayers to perform a tax detail inquiry to view the different taxing bodies for their area. In addition, taxpayers can do a five-year inquiry, which shows them their assessment, tax rate, and taxes due for the past five levy years.

Taxpayers can access the link by going to www.willcountysoa.com and performing a property search by parcel ID, property address, or property sale date. The results of the search will display the property record card for the parcel, where taxpayers can connect to the treasurer's site by clicking on "Treas Tax Info."

The Supervisor of Assessment Office's database specialist worked with NJS Enterprises, Inc., a Web company that also designed the SOA site, to create the link. Similar links have already been established with the Recorder's Office and the GIS Department, making the assessor's site one of the most comprehensive sites for Will County tax information.

"We're always working hard to make our Web site more user friendly, and we're excited to be able to offer one-stop viewing for taxpayers," said Supervisor of Assessments Rhonda Novak. "Now taxpayers can come to our site and link to tax information, maps, and other documents pertaining to their property with one click, which is far more convenient than having to visit three or four county Web sites to gather that information."

Mass Informational Mailing Targets Seniors

Within the next sixty days, many Will County residents 64 years old and older who own and occupy their property will receive information in the mail about senior property tax exemptions. This mass mailing is just one of the ways the Supervisor of Assessments Office is ensuring that all seniors receive the assistance to which they are entitled.

Though senior freeze forms were sent out earlier this month, the mailer is designed to reach those seniors who are not already receiving their exemptions. The mailing list was generated by cross-referencing public data with the county's current real estate data—something that has never been done before.

"It's our duty, especially in today's economy, to make sure seniors know about the exemptions that are available to them," said Supervisor of Assessments Rhonda Novak. "And we're exhausting every possible method for doing that, including using new data sources."

The Assessments Office has a long history of senior outreach and is in its fifth year of hosting senior events. But the recent popularity of senior assistance events is unprecedented. More than 350 seniors attended an early April event, showing that more seniors than ever before are aware of the benefits. But that is not enough for Novak.

"I want to reach all qualifying seniors in Will County," said Novak. "I want them to understand that this freeze is not a tax deferral plan or something they have to pay back. It's a benefit that's going to save them money and keep many people in their homes, and I want to be sure that they take advantage of it."

Novak has already held a dozen senior assistance events in many communities around the county this year. Upcoming events will be held at various locations, including township assessor offices and senior communities. There will also be events at several public libraries, including an all-day event at the Joliet Public Library. Staff from the Assessments Office will be on hand at all of these events to answer questions and help with applications.

Novak stresses the importance of going out into the community to offer assistance. "We want to continue to bring government services to the people, which is the goal of County Executive Larry Walsh," she said.

To qualify for the senior freeze, applicants must be 65 or older during 2009 with a total household income of \$55,000 or less and have lived in their homes January 1, 2008 and January 1, 2009. Seniors should bring a recent tax bill, the front page of their 1040 and their Social Security 1099 to apply.

To qualify for the senior homestead exemption of \$4,000, applicants must be 65 or older and own and occupy their home as their primary residence. Seniors only need to bring their deed and driver's license to apply.

Seniors can still sign up for the senior freeze and senior exemption at various township assessor offices and the Supervisor of Assessments Office, located on the 2nd floor of the County Building at 302 N. Chicago St. in Joliet. The hours are 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

For more information about any of the upcoming senior events or to talk with someone about senior exemptions, please contact Jennifer Scharf at the Supervisor of Assessments Office at (815) 740-4321. You can also visit www.willcountysoa.com to download and print application forms.



April 30, 2009
9:30 am – 3:00pm
Jackson Township Assessor's Office
100 E. Mississippi St.
Elwood, IL 60421

May 4, 2009
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Grand Haven (Residents only)
1520 Grand Haven Rd.
Romeoville, IL 60446

May 8, 2009
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Will County Farm Bureau
100 Manhattan Rd.
Joliet, IL 60433

May 11, 2009
9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Homer Township Assessor's Office
14350 W. 151st St.
Homer Glen, IL 60491

May 13, 2009
9:30 am – 4:00 pm
Joliet Public Library
3595 Black Rd.
Joliet, IL 60435

May 15, 2009
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Lago Vista (Residents only)
16800 Lago Vista Blvd.
Lockport, IL 60441

May 20, 2009
9:30 am – 3:30 pm
Carillon (Residents only)
21146 W. Carillon Dr.
Plainfield, IL 60544

May 22, 2009
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Crete Township Assessor's Office
1367 Wood St.
Crete, IL 60417

May 28, 2009
10:00am – 2:00 pm
Wilmington Library
201 S. Kankakee St.
Wilmington, IL 60481

May 29, 2009
10:00am - 2:00pm
Manhattan Township Assessor's Office
23465 Eastern Ave.
Manhattan, IL 60442



Will County Supervisor of Assessments
302 North Chicago Street
Joliet, Illinois 60432

Assessments: 815-740-4648
Mapping: 815-740-4664
Fax: 815-740-4696

**Committed to serving
Will County taxpayers with
fairness and pride.**

Lawrence M. Walsh, County Executive
Rhonda R. Novak, Supervisor of Assessments

Visit us on the Web!
WWW.WILLCOUNTYSOA.COM

According to state law, the Supervisor of Assessments Office provides statistical assessment performance data to the Illinois Department of Revenue. In addition, it gives technical advice and provides statistical analysis of assessment data to the township assessors and the Will County Board of Review. These statistics are derived from data gathered in the processing of approximately 25,000 Real Estate Transfer Declarations annually.

The Supervisor of Assessments Office also maintains records of total exempt properties and administers other special exemptions, such as the Senior Homestead Exemption, the Senior Assessment Freeze, the Veterans Exemption, the Veterans/Fraternal Organization Assessment Freeze, the Open Space Preferential Assessment Type, and the Model Home Exemption. In all, our office will grant over 30,000 Senior Homestead Exemptions and 10,875 Senior Assessment Freeze Exemptions for the 2007 tax year.

The Supervisor of Assessments acts as an equalization authority, and, as such, works closely with the twenty-four township assessors, who are responsible for the initial assessed valuation calculation. The Supervisor of Assessments also serves as Clerk of the Board of Review

Other duties of the Supervisor of Assessments Office include: issuing parcel PIN numbers, maintaining the county's base parcel map, publishing assessment change notices and mailing notices to taxpayers.

Employee Spotlight: Annette Boyd



Annette began working for the county in 2001 as supervisor of records management. She has also worked for the ICT department in the GIS division and as systems administrator for the Recorder of Deeds Office. She now works as the database specialist for the Supervisor of Assessments Office.

1. What do you like to do in your spare time?

Gardening. When I am able to find the time, I like to get my hands dirty. There is something cathartic about going outside, digging in the dirt. But the fact that I do it so infrequently usually means the plants die.

2. What are some of your pet peeves?

Losing my car keys, gapers' blocks, in-aisle store displays that I always knock over, tamper-proof plastic packages that I can't open without a chain saw, at-grade trains during rush hour, orphan socks, early Saturday morning meetings, and the phrase, "It doesn't look TOO bad."

3. What do you like best about your job?

Working for Rhonda Novak. Her office is continually trying to capitalize on technology in the most financially prudent way. There are always projects to tackle, given the changing nature of technology, and improvements being made. The diversity, while sometimes daunting, is always a challenge that demands ever expanding skill sets and the honing of my current skills.



4. Where is your favorite place to travel?

Brussels, Belgium. The historical architecture that surrounds you while the modern society thrives all around is amazing to see. The gothic churches stand in stark contrast to the modern office buildings. Standing in Grand'Place (Grote Markt), you have the sense of having stepped back in time. The richness of the history, the statues, the impacts of various leaders and countries throughout the centuries truly gives you a different perspective about your place in history.

The Assessment Review is a quarterly publication of the Will County Supervisor of Assessments Office. All articles written and edited by Shavahn Dorris-Jefferson unless otherwise indicated.