

TAXATION COMMITTEE MEETING
February 8, 2018

Present: Legislators Randy LaChausse, Andrea Moroughan and Greg Kulzer; County Manager Ryan Piche, Real Property Tax Director Candy Akin, Treasurer Patty O'Brien and Reporter Nick Altmire

The meeting was called at 3:40 p.m.

Candy distributed and reviewed her reports (attached).

Ryan Piche referenced Legislator LaChausse's inquiry at the last meeting whether the County could implement installment payments for real property taxes.

Patty O'Brien stated that all the Towns within the County would have to agree to participate. It would require all Towns to have computer equipment and access to the customized software to accept and track the installment collections. Currently, she knows of 4 or 5 towns that do not have computers. The County would need to re-vamp their computer software, and she would request an additional part-time employee to assist with respective work. She suggests giving Towns discretion instead of the County making the unilateral decision. Patty further informed the State's intent to upgrade computer software for property tax collections in 2019.

Ryan relayed that dairy farmers have also requested installment payments. If the Committee wants to pursue this matter, the next step would be to contact all Townships.

Legislator Kulzer would like to know the cost for computers and software, believing that some Towns would be receptive.

The Committee was in full agreement to pursue. Ryan Piche will present the initiative to Town Supervisors and report their feedback to the Committee.

Candy Akin reported that residents are receiving their STAR exemption relief checks, except those in the Beaver River Central School District who are not eligible because the district exceeded the State imposed 2% Tax Cap.

Proposed State Legislation was discussed at a recent RPT Director's Association meeting. Candy opposes the proposed Bill to make participation in the Income Verification Program mandatory for all enhanced STAR recipients. Many seniors are not required and do not file an income tax return. If the income drops for those eligible for Aged Exemption, the respective assessor currently contacts the senior to let them know they are eligible for enhanced benefits.

She also opposes the Bill to cap State-owned lands to convert to Section 8 wholly exempt and put all State-owned lands in PILOT programs. The Towns value State lands at full value and the State pays tax accordingly. If the State land value is removed from the rolls the cost would shift to the respective Towns and cause disproportionate impact (refer to attached sheets).

The County reforested lands are tax exempt.

Legislator Moroughan made a motion to formulate an opposing Resolution for Board action, seconded by Legislator Kulzer and carried. Candy will provide an example Resolution.

She also opposes the proposed Bill for the addition of 480-b which would allow property owners with a minimum of 10 acres to apply for forest exemptions. The current minimum is 50 acres. The landowner is required to have a forest management plan. Candy relayed the general consensus from the Directors' Association was that the legislation would not pass.

Candy asked if the media would relay a message from assessors to remind seniors to renew their exemptions; and for those who are turning 65 this year to inquire about exemption eligibility. Ryan suggested contacting OFA Director Kelly Hecker to include an article in their monthly newsletter and to place informative fliers at the senior meal sites, while reminding the upcoming Valentine's Day luncheon would probably have higher attendance. Nick Altmire offered to shoot a video with an assessor as a personal message and place on linkinglewiscounty.

The meeting concluded at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Clark, Clerk of the Board

REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES

Candy Akin, CCD - Director
Committee Meeting – February 8, 2018 – 3:30 pm

Committee:

Randy LaChausse – Chairman
Andrea Moroughan
Greg Kulzer

Ryan Piche – County Manager
Terry Clark – Clerk of the Board

Resolutions:

None

Budget Report:

Department is on budget. YTD Budget Report attached.

New Business:

Property tax relief credit checks are beginning to be sent from the state. The amount of the check varies depending on income, percentage of Basic STAR saving, and your school district MUST have complied with the 2% tax cap. (Enhanced STAR is 12% of your savings regardless of income). Beaver River school is the only district in Lewis County that DID NOT comply. Those residents will not be receiving any relief checks.

January 30th and 31st, I attended the county director's winter conference in Albany. One of the sessions included members from the Department of Taxation and Finance to review and discuss legislative and budget updates. A few of the topics that could potentially affect Lewis County are:

- Cap annual growth in the STAR benefit;
- Make participation in the Income Verification Program (IVP) mandatory for all enhanced STAR recipients;
- State-owned lands tax cap limitation – convert roll section 3 to roll section 8 wholly exempt and put all state-owned lands in PILOT programs;
- Addition of 480-b which would allow property owners with a minimum of 10 acres apply for forest exemptions. (currently minimum acres is 50)

Old Business:

None

Sales:

Sales are currently available on the website through December.

911:

We assigned and/or corrected 7 new numbers since our January 11th meeting.

Russ has been working with Cheryl, Brandan and a technician from Spillman to update the databases so they are in sync with each other.

End of Report