Fall 2009

AAP Journal
Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania

Issue 4 Volume 6
An affiliate of the County Commissioners Association Of Pennsylvania

CCAP County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania
Serving Counties Since 1886

Should Your Assessment Office Consider Pre-Employment Testing?

In his resource book, *Practical Issues in Employment Testing*, Dr. Robert G. Rose states that a "test is a standard device to measure skills, intellect, personality and other characteristics." That is one definition but, for the purpose of his research and writing, he more broadly defines the term test as "any standardized device that is administered in oral, paper and-pencil, computerized, or any other medium and which yields a score, rating, description or category."

CATEGORIES MOST COMMONLY TESTED

There are a number of standard tests available and most organizations do not have an interest in developing their own. The focus for testing may incorporate four categories: Cognitive tests measure learning and thinking ability. Personality tests look at the habitual ways that people act. Interest tests measure work interests. Specialized tests measure specific skills.

Among the companies interviewed, those that offer testing primarily administer cognitive and specific skills testing to their non-exempt populations. The exempt population or executive management receive personality and interest tests. Often the personality and interest results are utilized for succession and career planning. The American Psychological Association has standards for test development and use. Industrial test developers are available to assist in the design and development of tests or the selection and validation of appropriate standardized tests.

PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH TESTING TECHNIQUES AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Among the corporate test administrators interviewed, many warned that cognitive testing could present challenges in the area of adverse impact. It is imperative that the tests offered be job related and used as a diagnostic tool; not as the sole basis for selection. To insure the job relatedness, a job analysis should be conducted before any test is selected, designed and administered. Dr. Rose recommends several steps for use in developing and implementing a job analysis.

1. Perform analysis of the work or tasks to be performed through in-depth discussions with the incumbents in your office. Where time permits, sit and observe the incumbent for a period of time during a workday. Through this exercise, you will see and learn many of the "taken-for-granted" tasks that the incumbent performs in a day.

. . . *continued page four*

IDEAS FOR YOU

Argue With Success

When things go right for your group, don't just let them go. Find out why they went right and how you can replicate that. For example, suppose your employees finish a monthly task in half the usual time. Recognize their efforts—then ask why. Did some equipment or software work better? Were more people available? Did you get better cooperation from other departments? Were your supervisors more involved? Less? In other words, make the most of your success.

Return Phone Calls

Time-managment experts recommend setting aside an hour a day to make and return your phone calls. But which hour? The best times of the day are the first two hours of the morning and the last two hours of the afternoon. That's when most people are in the office and accessible by phone.

WHAT'S INSIDE

The President's Report, Legislative Update, AAP People, Legally Speaking And More!

AAP OFFICERS

Paulette Sebring, CPE
President
Monroe County Assessment Office
Administration Bldg. Room 102
1 Quaker Plaza
Stroudsburg, PA 18360
(570) 517-3137
psebring@co.monroe.pa.us

James Hercik, CPE
President-elect
Fayette County Court House
61 East Main Street
Uniontown, PA 15401-3514
(724) 430-1350
jahercik@fayettec.rba.com

Steve Howe, CPE
Vice President
Dauphin County Assessment Office
112 Market Street
PO Box 1295
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1295
(717) 780-6101
showe@dauphinc.org

Christopher Savage, CPE
Treasurer
Butler County Assessment Office
PO Box 1208
Butler, PA 16003
(724) 284-5320
csavage@co.butler.pa.us

Rebecca Reed, CPE
Secretary
Clarion County Assessment Office
421 Main Street, Suite 20
Clarion, PA 16214-1024
(814) 226-1118
rreed@co.clarion.pa.us

Randy Waggoner, CPE
Immediate Past President
Perry Co. Assessment Office
PO Box 37
New Bloomfield, PA 17068
(717) 582-2131
rwaggoner@perryco.org

AAP COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Michael Piper, CPE
AAP Journal Editor
Board Of Revision of Taxes
601 Walnut Street, Ste. 300
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 686-9282
Michael.Piper@phila.gov

Jeff Laudenslager, CPE
Government Information
Chester County Assessment Office
PO Box 2748
West Chester, PA 19380
(610) 344-6107
jlaudenslager@chesco.org



President's Message

Autumn Gives Me Peace!

I hope everyone is enjoying this autumn season. It is definitely my favorite time of the year. The crunch of dry leaves, the pumpkins and corn stocks, the cool brisk nights and the bright and sunny days just make me glad to be alive to enjoy what Mother Nature is providing for us. The season helps to ease my stress and rejuvenate my soul from the responsibilities of work and every day life.

Appeals are in full swing, calls about the school taxes are still trickling in, there are a few 319 applications to complete, the 2010 budget is still up for review and certification is just around the corner. Just when we think we have all this work completed and we can take a sigh of relief, it is time to think about incoming court appeals, interim assessments, printing next year's county tax bills and the homestead deadline, which is looming just ahead. Let's face it; there is virtually no slow time in the Assessment Office.

For every season, there is a specific workload that must be completed and a different deadline to meet. For me, school bills and assessment appeal time is the most stressful and that is why I am so thankful that these two assessment jobs fall during the autumn season. A short walk, a few deep breaths of that autumn air and I am again focused to get on with the job.

I hope that we will all get our appeal work finished, we'll have time to enjoy the beautiful fall weather and we will be able to gather together at the Eden Resort in Lancaster for the fall conference. I hope to see you there.

Paulette Sebring

Reporting On The Issues That Impact Assessors!

By
Jeff Laudenslager
Legislative
Committee Chair

Legislative Update

News From Harrisburg
As Of September 2009

Greetings fellow assessment professionals throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania! By the time you receive this issue of the *AAP Journal*, September will have come and gone. With the budget impasse in its third month, activity on real estate assessment-related legislation has slowed considerably. However, some advancement has been made in areas that impact all counties in the Keystone state including property tax reassessment, assessment appeals, charter schools and Clean and Green. Following is a summary of activity since the previous legislative update.

PROPERTY TAX REASSESSMENT

House Resolutions 93, 272 And 334
Related resolutions authorizing a multi-party study of the commonwealth's fragmented system of property tax assessment law and comparison to systems in other states including Maryland and California. Parties to include the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, the Local Government Commission and the State Tax Equalization Board along with assessors and county commissioner associations. Resolution 334 passed 195-0 in the House on June 24. A questionnaire was subsequently mailed to the chief assessors of all counties on July 31 seeking information on existing (re)assessment systems/processes and associated costs. Responses were due back to the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee by August 31.

House Bill 1661
An amendment that would place a moratorium on court-ordered reassessments until either June 30, 2011 or the General Assembly completes its study (see above). Passed 196-1 in the House on August 5 and currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee as of August 26.

Senate Bill 918
This amendment to Act 53 would bring counties of second class A and third class through eighth class under a single set of codes for assessments and appeals. Introduced June 5 and currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee as of August 3.

ASSESSMENT APPEALS

House Bills 141 And 142

These bills would allow an attorney-in-fact under a power of attorney signed by a person who has the right to appeal to the board of assessment appeals to

. . . continued page ten

Douglas E. Hill
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
17 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone (717) 232-7554 x 3115
fax (717) 232-2162
dhill@pacounties.org

Terry Cochran
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
PO Box 60769
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769
Phone (717) 526 1010 x 3334
fax (717) 526-1020
tcochran@pacounties.org

Lori Lawyer
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
17 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone (717) 232-7554 x 3112
fax (717) 232-2162
llawyer@pacounties.org

Debra S. Tingley, APR
DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS
PO Box 60769
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769
Phone (717) 526-1010 x 3336
fax (717) 526-1020
dtingley@pacounties.org

The *AAP Journal* is published four times a year.
DEADLINE for the Winter issue is December 4, 2009.

Article submissions are welcome. Send to:
Michael Piper, CPE
Journal Editor
Board of Revision Of Taxes
601 Walnut Street, Ste. 300
Philadelphia, PA 19106
Phone (215) 686-9282
fax (215) 686-4336
Michael.Piper@phila.gov

Publication Disclaimer
The information provided in this publication is not intended to take the place of professional advice. Readers are encouraged to consult with competent legal, financial, or other appropriate professionals. Statements of facts and opinions expressed in this publication, by authors other than Association staff and officers, are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent an opinion or philosophy of the officers, members and staff of the Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania (AAP). No endorsement of advertised products or services is implied by AAP unless those products or services are expressly endorsed, or are owned or managed by the Association programs, or our affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced, modified, distributed, or displayed in part or in whole, by any means, without advance written permission of AAP. Please direct your requests to Debra S. Tingley, APR. *Note:* As part of its copyright agreement, the AAP grants the author the right to place the final version of his/her manuscript on the author's home page, subject to AAP's standards, or in a public digital repository, provided there is a link to the AAP Web site.

DEVNET
INCORPORATED
www.devnetinc.com

- CAMA utilizing APEX® Sketching
- Costing Options including Marshall & Swift®
- Comprehensive Sales Ratio Studies
- Market Analysis through MRA
- Field Data Collection
- Assessment Administration
- Parcel Transfers & Conveyances
- Appeal Processing & Scheduling
- Manufactured Homes
- Tax Extension
- Billing & Collection
- Per Capita Billing
- Tax Disbursement
- Tax Claim Processing
- GIS Integration



cutting edge
Government Software Solutions

Call toll free 866.4.DEVNET or visit us at: www.devnetinc.com

2. Design and administer to the incumbents a questionnaire that asks them to rate the priority and frequency of the tasks identified in step one.

3. Ask the supervisors of the incumbents to rank their incumbents' success on the tasks identified in steps one and two. The supervisors' ranking should be quantified and include an explanation as to how and why they arrived at this ranking.

4. With steps one to three completed, you may now design or select an appropriate testing tool to measure performance and administer this tool to the incumbents.

5. Collect, score and record the results from the incumbents' tests.

6. In an ideal world, at the end of a year you would evaluate the incumbents' performance and establish a correlation between success and their score on the testing tool. However; in the real world, through the next year, administer the same testing tool to all potential candidates applying for this same job." This testing tool is better than no tool at all if challenged on how did you select" suggests Dr. Rose.

7. With the job analysis and testing scores established, you may then use a percentile norm. A percentile represents the value below which the specified percentage of cases falls. For example suppose you have 478 clerical applicants who you tested by over a two-year period. It is expected that this large group of applicants is representative of current and future applicants. Therefore, percentile norms provide hiring managers with a method of judging how an applicant's test score compares to many other applicants who have taken the same tests. Without a table of percentile norms it would be quite difficult to judge how "good" a score is.

8. The percentile norm should not stand alone however; but should be utilized with an expectancy chart. This chart indicates the probability that, if hired, an applicant's level of job performance would be satisfactory.

9. About every two years, re-evaluate and adjust the expectancy tables. Be sure and focus on those incumbents and new hires whose performance has remained consistent. If you are a smaller office and can't do a formal validation, then Dr. Rose suggests that you compare your needs to what other firms are doing and ask yourself, "What's worked for them?" and, "What makes sense for my office?" It is important to keep in mind that while an applicant's test score is very useful for predicting their future level of performance on the job, it is only one piece of information to be used in the selection process. Clear, comprehensive policies and procedures, which have been reviewed by a legal professional, are recommended by testing professionals. These policies and procedures should be communicated to all test administrators either in a formal training process or through an informal communication method such as a memo and training manual. Dr. Rose suggests each company approach testing with the mindset of, "What's right for the company?"

and, “What’s right for the person being tested?” Watch the wording used in giving instructions; be clear and explain the value or purpose of the test to the applicant.

The introduction of ADA into the workplace furthered the need for policies and guidelines for testing people with disabilities. As one testing administrator commented, “adaptations for testing need not jeopardize the quality of the tests or change it from the typical testing procedures.” If an adaptation changes a test too much, then it is possible in some circumstances to waive the test.

It is imperative that a tracking process be implemented in any testing procedures you employ. The information you record about the candidates’ profile, tests given and scores achieved are critical pieces of data to make sure that your procedures are valid.

The justification for testing can be a challenge for managers. Their concerns are often focused on the costs and the time to administer.

THE FUTURE OF TESTING

Dr. Rose makes several predictions in his book, *Practical Issues in Employment Testings*, which were widely supported by other professionals in the field. These include: Test use will continue to grow and improve as data banks grow on existing tests and research.

Research and use of computerized testing will continue as well as other test-delivery technologies, for example, video testing. One firm has recently implemented a customer service video test and feedback and thus far has been favorable from candidate and hiring authority alike. Concern will continue to focus on being respectful and non-invasive while gathering needed information.

What Compliance Issues Are Involved In Creating A Pre-Employment Test?



Pre-employment testing is a selection tool that can provide valuable information to aid the selection process. Pre-employment tests can add objectivity to the selection process if applicants for the same position take the same test under the same conditions and if the test accurately measures skills essential to job performance. Pre-employment tests should be validated (content validity, construct validity, criterion-related validity) to ensure that they measure the knowledge or skills that an applicant would need to perform the job.

Many compliance issues should be considered when implementing a pre-employment testing program. The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures of 1978 is one tool that can help with compliance issues. The Guidelines set forth a single set of employment standards on all employers covered under Title VII or Executive Order 11246, and they aid in determining whether an employer policy or practice causes a “disproportionate adverse impact” on the employment opportunities of any race, sex, or ethnic group. To determine whether a selection procedure causes an adverse impact, you should apply the “4/5ths rule” or 80% rule. The 80% rule involves comparing the hiring rates for different groups. If the selection rate for a protected group (defined by race, ethnic origin, sex, etc.)is less than 4/5ths (or 80%) of that for the group with the highest selection rate, the procedure is considered discriminatory.

Pre-employment testing must adhere to the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If a test screens out or tends to screen out a person with a disability, the test must be job related and must be consistent with business necessity. Even if a test is job related and justified by business necessity, an employer has an obligation to provide a specific reasonable accommodation, if necessary. The reasonable accommodation obligation either applies to testing by protecting persons with disabilities from being excluded from jobs that they actually can do, because a disability prevents them from taking a test or negatively influences a test result. However, an employer does not have to provide an alternative test format for a person with an impaired skill if the purpose of the test is to measure that skill. Employers are encouraged to check their state laws before implementing a pre-employment testing program. If a testing program involves medical examinations, AIDS testing, or genetic testing, other rules and regulations govern those types of tests.



George B. Zeyn Jr.
Chief Assessor
Union County

Year in assessment field: Seven years

Marital status and family: Married, one son

What irritates me most in the assessment business: High-cost houses, then the owner does not want to pay their share of taxes

Most people would be surprised to know: I own an antique shop

Biggest challenge as an assessor: Gray areas of Clean & Green Laws

First Job: Clerk at grocery store

If I couldn't be an assessor, I'd be: A tax accountant

If I won millions in the lottery, I would: Retire and run the antique shop, share it with the family

Favorite vacation: Florida Gulf Coast

Favorite food and drink: Seafood and steak with a Long Island Ice Tea

Favorite movie: Dirty Harry series

Three people living or dead that I would invite to dinner: Clint Eastwood, Richard Nixon and Jack Ham of the Steelers

The hardest lesson I ever learned as an assessor was the time: I had to deal with lawyers that do not know assessment law

If I could live in the past for one day, I would change: College life

My best friend: My father

MEMBERABILIA

Chapter Notes And Other News

North West Chapter

Charles "J.R." Hardester, CPE of Lawrence County is the new president of the North West Chapter of AAP. ***Becky Reed, CPE*** of Clarion County is now the chapter Vice President.

South East Chapter

Two Lehigh County staffers within the assessment office, have reached a milestone with 20 years of service in the assessment field—***Joann M. Neikam*** with 20 years and ***Ronald F. Rehrig*** with 22 years.

Congratulations to Lehigh County's newest CPEs—***Robert R. Baldwin, Corey A. Cieslak, Michelle A. Daddona, Dennis Furst and Douglas S. Teti.***

Franci "Buddy" Unger been appointed Lehigh County's interim director of assessment with the retirement of ***Michael Martucci*** on August 14th, after 36 years of service.

North East Chapter

Eugene Dovin of Lackawanna County retired as an assessor on August 14. He has now been appointed to serve on the county's assessment appeal board.

Marty Duffy of Lackawanna County recently passed his C.P.E. exam. Congratulations to Marty!

Thomas Hill has been appointed as Education Chairman and ***John Nolan and Eric Brown*** have been appointed as alternates to the board of directors.

Ronald Lutes, CPE has joined Northampton County as its newest assessor.

The 2010 officers for the Northeast Chapter are: ***Anthony Alu***, Luzerne County, president, ***Kim Steigerwalt,*** Carbon County, vice president, ***Lynda Kyttle***, Monroe County, secretary/treasurer.

Send Us Your News!

Let's know what is happening in your county.

Let us share the information with your peers.

Send us notices of promotions, job changes, awards, etc.

Send to:

Terry Cochran
AAP
Deputy Director
tcochran@pacounites.org

INFOCON CORPORATION
Celebrating 33 Years 1976 - 2009
172 Gateway Road, P.O. Box 568
Ebensburg, Pennsylvania 15931-0568
Telephone: (814) 472-6066, Fax: (814) 472-5019
E-Mail - infocon@ic-access.com Web Site - www.infoconcorporation.com
Providing County, School and Municipal Governments.....
Consulting
Tax Printing Service
Tax Claim Services
On-Line Computer Services
Tax Collection Services
Forms and Supplies
Document Imaging Services
Microfilm Services
Digital Scanning Services

LEGALLY SPEAKING



Assessment Reform An Opportunity For Change

Joan Righter Price, Esquire
Chair, AAP Assessment Reform Committee
Solicitor, Montgomery County Board Of Assessment

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court's decision this spring in *Clifton et al. v. Allegheny*, 969 A.2d 1197 (Pa.2009) launched recent efforts toward reforming Pennsylvania's assessment system. However, AAP's efforts started years ago when the Association formed the Assessment Reform Committee.

There are currently five different assessment statutes in Pennsylvania: the General County Assessment Law, First Class, Second Class, Third Class, and the Fourth to Eighth Class and Selective County Assessment Law. In addition to these assessment statutes, assessment provisions can be found in other places such as the County Code, Second Class Township Code and the Municipalities Planning Code. Case law interpreting the statutes must also be considered. Given the fact that the law is not easy to find and is sometimes difficult to read, the Assessment Reform Committee decided that it was best to start by consolidating the assessment law for 65 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties and then we'd tackle actual reform.

Part of this effort was to modernize the antiquated language found in the General County Assessment Law, parts of which date back to 1931. The results of several years' work by the Assessment Reform Committee and the Local Government Commission are now pending in the legislature as Senate Bill 918. We hope this bill will serve as a template for actual reform that may result from a study being conducted by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. Wait, I'm getting ahead of myself. First, the background.

Why all the fuss about assessment reform? In *Clifton et al. v. Allegheny*, infra, a group of property owners challenged Allegheny County's use of a base year assessment system as unconstitutional. After several days of hearings, Common Pleas Court Judge Stanton R. Wettick agreed. The problem is that Judge Wettick's decision was not limited to Allegheny County. He ruled that Pennsylvania's statutes permitting the indefinite use of a base year for assessing property are facially unconstitutional because they do not require periodic reassessment. The opinion details Judge Wettick's investigation of other counties that use a base year system and how the ratio studies by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) indicate whether a county is in need of a countywide reassessment. He concluded that other counties use a base year system of property assessment and, in most of them, that situation "produced substantial levels of inequities in the ratio of assessed values to market values, which could easily be reduced through periodic reassessments." Allegheny County appealed Judge Wettick's ruling directly to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court .

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court held that Pennsylvania assessment statutes permitting use of a base year assessment system were not unconstitutional on their face but the system as applied in Allegheny County is unconstitutional. The majority declined to hold the statutes were unconstitutional at this time, preferring instead to strongly suggest that the Pennsylvania Legislature address the problem. The majority rejected Justice Baer's argument, found in his Concurring Opinion, that the court set a 20 percent coefficient of dispersion as the standard by which uniformity would be measured. In footnote 43 of the majority opinion, written by Chief Justice Castille, the majority sets forth its rationale:

While there may very well come a time when this Court will be obliged to fill a

legislative void in this area, it is today's decision that provides notice to the General Assembly to make any necessary amendments to the commonwealth's property assessment laws so as to ensure their constitutionality when applied in the various counties .

The Court remanded the case to the Allegheny County Court to decide when and how the county is to conduct a countywide reassessment. Allegheny County filed an *Application for Relief* and for *Stay of Remand* with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The Court denied that application on August 7, 2009.

HOW HAS THE LEGISLATURE ANSWERED *CLIFTON ET AL. V. ALLEGHENY*?

HR 334: On June 5, 2009, Representative Dermody (D- Allegheny) introduced House Resolution 334 that directs the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to study Pennsylvania's assessment system along with the assessment systems of other states, including Maryland and California. Why Maryland and California? Maryland has a program of cyclical reassessment that reassesses a third of the state each year. California is well-known for Proposition 13 that permits reassessment of a property only when it is sold. These are not the only states to be considered but are specifically mentioned in the resolution.

The LFBC study must include an evaluation of what levels of government levy a property tax, who conducts property tax assessment (state or local employees or contractors), how reassessments are financed, how often reassessments are conducted, and whether there are any taxpayer protections that limit the amount of additional tax that can be levied on an individual taxpayer as the result of a reassessment. The report must also include any special constitutional provisions that exist in other states with regard to the assessment of real property. The LFBC must complete a separate study of the impact of Clean and Green (Act 319 of 1974) on local municipalities and on local school taxes. These studies must be complete by June 30, 2010.

The LFBC mailed a confidential survey to all County Chief Assessors on July 31 and they asked for the completed survey to be returned by August 31. If you have not already done so, please return your county's survey to the LFBC's project director, Dr. Maryann Nardone. This is your opportunity to weigh in and voice your opinion on the future of Pennsylvania's assessment system.

HB 1661 – Introduced by Representative Levdansky (D-Allegheny and Washington) on June 10, 2009, this legislation would place a moratorium on court-ordered reassessments until June 30, 2011 or legislation is enacted to change Pennsylvania's assessment system, whichever comes first. The bill, as amended, would permit counties to continue with a court-ordered reassessment, at their discretion.

SB 918 – Consolidated County Assessment Law - Drafted jointly by the Local Government Commission and the AAP Assessment Reform Committee, this legislation was introduced by Senator Eichelberger (R-Blair, Bedford, Fulton, Huntingdon, Mifflin) on June 5, 2009. The Consolidated County Assessment Law combines the general, third, and fourth to eighth class and selective county assessment laws into one, consolidated statute. It would apply to all Pennsylvania counties with the exception of Philadelphia and Allegheny. These counties were not included in SB 918 because they each have their own assessment law and their own procedures that differ dramatically from the other counties.

The combination of the general, third, and fourth to eighth class county assessment laws presented a challenge in that some of the provisions are inconsistent and had to be reconciled in order to develop one comprehensive assessment law. Some of the differences were preserved, such as the option for county commissioners in fourth to eighth class counties to serve as the board of assessment appeals.

WHERE ARE WE?

Right now, we are in a wait-and-see position. Hopefully, the General Assembly approves SB 918 and the Governor signs it so it is easier for the legislature to amend the assessment laws they believe should be changed. The LFBC will complete their study by June 30, 2010 and make suggestions for reforming Pennsylvania's assessment system. The legislature can then prepare legislation to adopt any of the suggested reform measures the LFBC recommends which they find appropriate.

This is a tremendous opportunity for change, which we in the assessment field can embrace and play an active role in shaping the future of property assessment in Pennsylvania.



Update continued from page three

file an appeal and represent that person in all aspects of the appeal. This representation shall not be construed as the unauthorized practice of law. It goes on to state that the appeal of an assessment decision by the board of assessment appeals to the court of common pleas shall be a de novo proceeding. Both bills introduced January 30 and no further committee action to date.

Senate Bills 470, 471 And 472
These amendments would prohibit the board of appeals from imposing or assessing any fee relating to the appeal. All bills introduced March 2 and no further committee action to date.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Senate Bill 687
An act that would provide an exemption from real estate taxes for charter schools or associated owner(s) of the property. Introduced March 27, passed 49-0 in the Senate on June 8 and currently in the House Education Committee as of June 10.

ACT 319 (CLEAN AND GREEN)

House Bills 208 And 1394
Senate Bill 298
Bills allowing the owner of a property enrolled in Act 319 to lease land for oil and gas exploration and further allowing for the drilling and extraction of oil and gas under certain conditions without breaching and triggering a rollback on the entire parcel. CCAP believes Senate Bill 298 will ultimately pass and is currently in the Appropriations Committee as of June 22.

In a related matter, Governor Rendell agreed to delay his proposal for imposing a tax on natural gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale reserve on August 31.

House Bills 984 And 1394
Same as above but pertaining to lease of land for wind power generation. Both bills passed 193-0 in the House on June 23 and currently in the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Manatron, the Nation's Leading Provider of Property Software Systems and Services, is Proud to Have Served Customers in Pennsylvania Since 1992.



We know that giving our customers access to the latest technology is an essential ingredient to their ongoing success. From our first installation in 1969 until today, Manatron continually invests to produce the best solution-based products and services for our clients.

Always forward thinking, Manatron software currently provides over 1300 customers across North America with the power to manage over 20 million parcels while meeting the daily needs of their constituents.

MANATRON
The power to manage well.®

Manatron Appraisal Services
4105 Executive Drive • Beavercreek, Ohio 45430
800.776.7227 • www.manatron.com

CAMA SYSTEMS AND LAPTOP COMPUTERS: KEYS TO BETTER PRODUCTIVITY



Use of a Computer Aided Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system on a laptop computer in the field provides an opportunity for an increase in productivity and assessment quality. As the price of laptop computers continues to drop, even inexpensive laptops can provide the computing power and storage space required to perform complex assessment calculations, store the assessment data for an entire county and run a sophisticated Geographic Information System (GIS).

In Wayne County, each assessor has a laptop computer that contains all of the assessment data for every parcel in the county and a copy of the same CAMA program used in the Assessment Office. This means that as they review parcels in the field they can compare the current data with what they see. While still on site, they can make changes to sketches, add photographs and record assessment data directly in the computer. If the assessor adds a new structure, the program will prompt for all of the information necessary to calculate a value. This avoids the inefficiency of transcribing paper notes back at the office and the possibility of having to rely on memory for a forgotten piece of information. While still in the field, the assessor can calculate new values based on a cost model and a market model to see if the new assessment will reflect the assessor's estimate of the correct value.

Since they have the data for every parcel with them, this means they can also stop at parcels outside their area under review to check on new construction or to collect data or photographs for an appeal. Upon returning to the office, they place their laptops in docking stations and every night the system automatically synchronizes the changes they have made with the central copy of the data and every other assessor's laptop. The following morning every laptop has all of the latest assessment data, sketches and photographs reflecting all of the work done on the prior day.

Having a GIS available in the field provides great advantage for the CAMA system. Through integration with the CAMA system, the GIS program provides the assessor with a color-coded map of every parcel. Different colors identify parcels that need review and distinguish them from parcels that an assessor has already checked. Other colors indicate to the assessor, at a glance, parcels that have had a building permit filed or where someone has indicated the need for a recheck.

These parcels can then receive greater scrutiny. The GIS provides optional map layers that the assessors can turn off and on such as contours and aerial photography. These can provide useful information about topography and structure location that the assessor cannot otherwise determine without considerable time and effort. In the field, the assessor uses the GIS to provide a map to the parcels that need checking. When he arrives at the physical location, he uses the mouse to click on the parcel for review. This immediately opens the CAMA system to the assessment information for the parcel where review and, if necessary, updating takes place.

Upon completion of the review, another click changes the color of the parcel in the GIS and displays the map for the selection of the next parcel. This helps the assessor plan an efficient route to all of the parcels requiring review. Conversely, if the assessor needs to find a particular parcel, a click in the CAMA system will select the parcel in the GIS and center the map on that parcel.

The combined GIS/CAMA system has uses that extend outside of the assessment office. The Tax Claim Bureau uses the system to assist it with posting of properties for tax sale. A link between the CAMA system and the Tax Claim system provides a way of identifying parcels for posting. The GIS provides a color-coded map indicating the parcels for posting and the CAMA system records the date and time of the posting as well as the identity of the poster. Back at the office, the program creates all of the necessary follow up documents.

A well thought out GIS/CAMA system can provide a multitude of benefits. More productive systems in the field mean one assessor can evaluate more properties on any given day. Easy visual identification of nearby parcels requiring review means fewer trips and lower fuel costs. Point-and-click map technology means fewer mistakes from incorrect entry of parcel numbers. An overall system that stays out of the way and just works means assessors spend their time assessing property not fighting with a computer.

Knowledgeable assessors, an accurate Geographic Information System and a reliable Computer Aided Mass Appraisal system are important components of an effective countywide assessment program. Complete integration of all three produces a powerful whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

By
Bruce Grandjean
Grandjean & Braverman, Inc.

17 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 232-7554
fax (717) 232-2162

CCAP
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
Serving Counties Since 1886

An affiliate of the County Commissioners Association Of Pennsylvania

Our insight. Your appraisal.

Whether you are a tax collector, assessor, city treasurer or auditor, Tyler's insight means your empowerment. Our iasWorld, Munis® and Incode product suites do more than meet your needs. They anticipate them. Little wonder that Tyler continues to set the standard for seamless, scalable, appraisal and tax software. Or that Tyler CLT® appraisal services are ranked best in class. To learn more, visit us at tylertech.com or email us at info@tylertech.com.

Empowering people who serve the public™

tyler technologies