AAP Journal
Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania

AAP
ASSESSORS' ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

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CCAP
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS Association of Pennsylvania

An affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

Assessor Safety - Minimizing Risks

By Keith Wentz
Risk Management and Underwriting Manager, CCAP

Assessors play an important role in county government operations. The assessment process, as with any county government service, has inherent risks which may present themselves during field work. This article will discuss a few potential risks and provide recommendations on how to best respond.

It is important for the assessor to plan ahead when scheduling visits. In some circumstances, the location you visit may be unfamiliar so it is imperative to gather as much information as possible through discussions with peers or others who are familiar with the location.

- Leave your itinerary with others so they know where you are at and where you will be going. Ensure your cell phone is charged and working properly.
- Program important contacts into speed dial so they can be contacted quickly.
- Limit the amount of cash you carry.
- Conceal personal items in the trunk of your vehicle.
- Do not take any unnecessary items and always lock your vehicle.

During every visit, be attentive of your surroundings. Plan to arrive a few minutes ahead of schedule and scope out the area you will be visiting. When parking your vehicle, park in the direction you want to go after completing your visit. Know your most direct exit route.

Determine a place or location to go in the event of an emergency. Be observant of all activities around you. After arriving, attempt to avoid entrance ways or areas where someone could easily hide out of view. Your intuition is vital so trust it.

When approaching the dwelling or building, your body language is critical. Walk with your head up, at a fast pace in a confident manner, always being alert and vigilant. Keep your car keys in your hand for easy access to ensure you can enter your vehicle quickly and safely. Your keys can also be used as a self-defense weapon if needed.

It is possible your visits may become confrontational. If verbally harassed, continue to maintain a professional demeanor. It is important to respond directly, but avoid responding to verbal challenges. Do not get caught up in confrontations; immediately leave the situation. Be aware of what is going on when exiting, as things may have changed from the time of your arrival.

Another potential risk you may encounter during visits is the presence of animals, especially dogs. Be cautious of all animals, even those that are restrained. It is recommended before entering a property to call out/whistle/use your car horn to make your presence known. If after doing so there is no reaction, you'll then be able to continue with your visit.

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AAP Education Calendar

AAP Board Meeting
Sheraton Station Square, Pittsburgh
April 30

2019 Annual Conference
Sheraton Station Square, Pittsburgh
May 1 - 3

CPE Class Review
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
June 3 - 5

AAP Board Meeting
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
July 12

Fall 2019 CPE Classes
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
Intro - September 15 - 20
Site/Market – September 23 - 27
Cost – September 20 - October 4
Income - October 7 - 11

2019 Fall Conference
Hershey Lodge & Convention Center
November 7 - 8

CPE Class Review
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
December 2 - 4

** Check the AAP website, www.paassessors.org, for more details!*

What's Inside

President's Message, Legislative Update, County Corner, AAP People

AAP OFFICERS

Deborah Crawford, CPE
Tioga County
President
(570) 723-8112
dcrawford@tiogacountypa.us

Mark Kellerman, CPE
Centre County
President Elect
(814) 355-6721
mjkellerman@centrecountypa.gov

Robert Roland, CPE
Bedford County
Vice President
(814) 623-4842
rroland@bedfordcountypa.org

Susan Miller, CPE
Adams County
Treasurer
(717) 337-9837
sbmiller@adamscounty.us

Jennifer Pettina, CPE
Centre County
Secretary
(814) 355-6721
jkpettina@centrecountypa.gov

Larry Shubert, CPE
Philadelphia County
Immediate Past President
(215) 686-7680
larry.shubert@phila.gov

AAP COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Jonathan Schuck, CPE
Chester County
Government Information Chair
(610) 344-6147
jschuck@chesco.org

Charles 'JR' Hardester, CPE
Lawrence County
Education Co Chair
(724) 656-2191
chardester@co.lawrence.pa.us

Randy Waggoner, CPE
Perry County
Education Co Chair
(717) 582-2131
rwaggoner@perryco.org



President's Message

I can't believe this is my final message as AAP President! You were right, JR - it went by quicker than I could have ever imagined. I will be passing the gavel to the very capable Mark Kellerman of Centre County at the 2019 Annual Conference. He is a knowledgeable assessor, a good friend and an all-around great guy. I look forward to serving as Immediate Past President under Mark's leadership.

This past year has been one of the most rewarding and busiest years of my career. Along with CCAP and the Pennsylvania Local Government Commission, we made great strides with regard to assessment reform. I'm proud of what we have accomplished, but there is more to be done.

As I write this message, we are in the final steps of bringing all of the chapters under the umbrella of the AAP. This new relationship will be a good thing for both the AAP and the chapters.

I hope to see all of you at the Sheraton Station Square, Pittsburgh from May 1st through 3rd for our Annual Conference. The conference planning committee, with Chairman Robbie Roland, Bedford County, has worked hard to schedule a variety of great educational opportunities.

I want to thank the executive officers, Board of Governors' members, committee chairs, Danette Magee of the Local Government Commission and all of the AAP members for their support. A special thanks to Terry Cochran and Lori Lawyer; I couldn't have done the job without you.

Deb

Deborah Crawford
AAP President

Chief Assessor, Tioga County



Legislative Update

By Jonathan B. Schuck, Chair
Government Information Committee and
Director of Assessment/Tax Claim, Chester County

Greetings fellow assessment professionals throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. By the time you receive this issue of the AAP Journal, the vestiges of winter should be melted and the first signs of spring should be bursting forth. With the transition of seasons in progress, I hope this Update finds you healthy, safe and enjoying the warmer weather.

During the first two months of the 2019/2020 Session, 1064 bills/resolutions have been introduced, 13 of which pertain to assessment-related matters. Of the 13 pertinent bills, 12 represent familiar topics and nine are bills re-introduced from the 2017/2018 Session. I do not anticipate significant activity on many of these bills in the near future but a topical summary is provided below:

Property Tax Reform
House Bill 382 (elimination)
Senate Bill 76 (diversification of school district taxes)

Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans/Surviving Spouses
House Bills 29, 287 and 542
Senate Bills 77 and 92

Assessment Appeal Reform
Senate Bill 334 (limitations on taxing district appeals)

Institutions Covered under Purely Public Charity Act
House Bill 191

Professional Licensure – making the Assessors Certification Act applicable to counties of the first class
House Bill 274/ enate Bill 217

House Bill 191

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House Bill 274/Senate Bill 217

CCAP Priorities and Assessment Reform

Pennsylvania's counties have chosen six legislative priorities for 2019, each of which highlights their commitment to core county responsibilities and ultimately to the people and communities of Pennsylvania. One of those six is **Assessment Reform**.

Whether or not they are actively considering a reassessment, counties can use the knowledge and resources in newly developed tools to maintain fair and uniform assessment practices on an ongoing basis.

By looking at the assessment system as a whole and taking advantage of the available tools and best practices, counties can continue to offer confidence that assessments are done correctly, fairly and uniformly across the commonwealth. Counties have been urged to use those tools developed by AAP, CCAP and the Local Government Commission.

For more information about this and the other five county priorities, please visit *www.pacounties.org/GR/Documents/2019PrioritiesBrochure.pdf*.

AAP STAFF

Douglas E. Hill
Executive Director
PO Box 60769
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769
(717) 736-4715
fax (717) 526-1020
dhill@pacounties.org

Terry Cochran
Deputy Director
PO Box 60769
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769
(717) 736-4734
fax (717) 526-1020
tcochran@pacounties.org

Lori Lawyer
Administrative Assistant
PO Box 60769
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769
(717) 736-4712
fax (717) 526-1020
llawyer@pacounties.org

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Deadline for the Summer 2019 issue is June 5, 2019.

Article submissions are welcome.
Please send to:
Terry Cochran
AAP Deputy Director

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AAP People & Chapter News

South Central Chapter

The chapter meets quarterly - March, June, September and December. Each meeting begins with the business meetings at 9 a.m., with seminars beginning immediately after the meeting (approximately 9:30 a.m.) and are held at the Adams County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center, 670 Old Harrisburg Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325. Please contact Susan Miller at (717) 337-9837 for more information

Bradford County

Congratulations to **Melody Bentley** who passed her CPE exam and has been promoted from a Field Investigator Trainee to a Field Investigator I!

The county is also happy to announce and welcome back a former CPE, **Tonya Ritchey**, as a full time Field Investigator I.

Cumberland County

Good luck to **Bill Reath**, Cumberland County Commercial Appraiser who is retiring May 10, 2019.

Bill has been with the county for 33 years. Bill and his wife are looking for a home in Adams County to move closer to their daughter and grandchildren. He hopes to take the entire family to Disney World, work on his house, do LOTS of fly fishing, help his kids and grandkids anyway possible and do some volunteering.

His parting words are, "thanks for the memories!!!!!"

Fayette County

Congratulations to **Colin Boyle** who passed his CPE exam in December 2019!

Lancaster County

Good luck to **Wendy Gockley**, who left Lancaster County to pursue a career in real estate sales with Berkshire Hathaway in Lancaster. Her last day was February 28, 2019.

Wendy, who had been with the county for almost 25 years, said she thoroughly enjoyed working with the other Lancaster County staff and members of the AAP and South Central Chapter. She enjoyed serving, interacting and aiding homeowners in Lancaster County and always strived to be a fair and conscientious CPE.

Pike County

Congratulations to **Brittany Daniels** who passed her CPE exam!

AAP News

Send Your Chapter and County News!

Don't forget to send your county or chapter news for the Summer 2019 issue of the AAP Journal. Our next deadline is **June 5.**

Please send your news to Terry Cochran at *tcochran@pacounties.org*.

Join us in Pittsburgh!

AAP 2019 Annual Conference



There's still time to register for the the **2019 AAP Annual Conference** at the Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square from May 1 to 3.

Just a few conference reminders:

- Register now on the AAP website, *www.paassessors.org* to take advantage of the varied array of classes being offered!
- Don't forget to nominate one of your fellow assessors for the Annual Awards. Information about the awards is also available on our website.
- Plan to attend the Membership Meeting on May 2 to vote for the next slate of AAP officers.
- Bring an item to the Education Auction on May 1 to be auctioned off to benefit the AAP chapters.
- Lastly, be sure to check out the VisitPittsburgh website at *www.visitpittsburgh.com* to plan your trip!

See you in May!

Assessor Safety

Continued from page 1

When knocking or ringing the door bell, continue to be aware of your surroundings. When your client answers the door, ask if they own a dog or other animals. If there is a dog on the premises, ask that the dog be restrained. Or, for the owner to hold the dog if appropriate. Despite your desire to do so, avoid petting a strange dog. If challenged by a dog, don't run, stand still dropping your arms to your side. Don't acknowledge, smile, rattle your keys or make any sudden moves. Wait until the dog loses interest, then slowly back away. In the unfortunate circumstance you are attacked, use your equipment as a shield or a weapon.

Although you hope all visits will go smoothly, you may encounter hostile clients. Some final thoughts and recommendations for consideration include:

- Try to remain calm.
- Rehearse what you would say and do in the event a visit goes bad.
- Attempt to avoid confronting the client unless absolutely necessary to protect yourself.
- If use of force is needed, be reasonable and not excessive.
- If properly trained on its use, pepper spray, mace or other repellants can be utilized; however, appropriate training from a certified instructor and written policies and procedures on its use are required.
- If a client indicates they have a weapon, assume their statement is true and immediately leave the area.
- Seek additional safety recommendations from your local Sheriff's department

Expect the unexpected and anticipate what could go wrong. Talk with management and your peers. Share best practices. The need to implement preventive measures is critical and sharing your experiences will aid in that effort.



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Eight Tips for Effective Time Management

1. Know Your Goals
2. Prioritize Wisely
3. Just Say No
4. Plan Ahead
5. Eliminate Distractions
6. Delegate More Often
7. Watch How You Spend Your Time
8. Take Care of Yourself

Full article by Lee Polevoi is available at *https://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/employees/8-tips-for-effective-time-management/*

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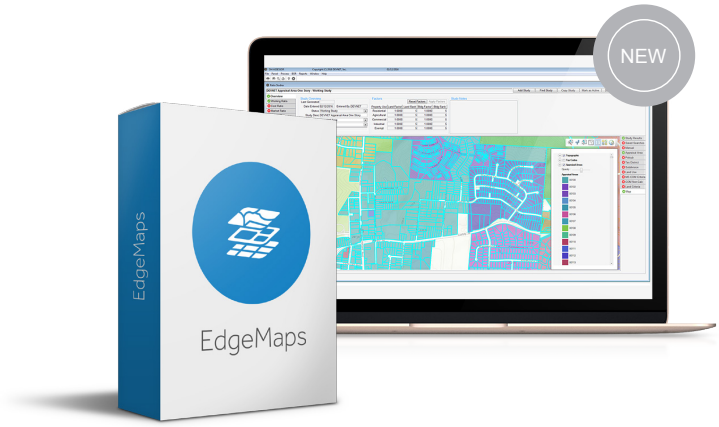
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County Corner: Northumerland County

Northumberland County is lush with natural resources, and provides significant opportunities for many outdoor adventurers. The county is home to the Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area and part of Knoebel's Amusement Resort lies in the county.



Knoebel's Amusement Resort

People also come from around the world to study the geological formation known as Whale Back, a folded rock structure exhibiting structural elements and stages of deformation for the Valley and Ridge Province.



Whale Back Formation

Notably, Northumberland County is the home of Weis Markets (a food retailer founded in 1912 in Sunbury that has grown to 205 stores operating in seven states), and the city hotel where the first successful three-wire lighting system was made in 1883 (since named the Edison Hotel).

The West and North Branch divisions of the Pennsylvania Canal joined in Northumberland County and were used to transport boats of coal from Nanticoke and lumber from Williamsport.

Northumberland County was created by act of Assembly on March 21, 1772, four years after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix led to the New Purchase, which extensively expanded the British owned grounds in the watershed lands east of the Ohio River. At the time Northumberland County was created, it is contended that it was the largest county in its early stages, having boundaries that spanned from Wayne County to the Conewango Creek (Warren County), and having southern boundaries that coincided with points on Moshannon Creek, Standing Stone Creek, Kishacoquillas Creek, and the Juniata River. In 1785, 28 counties were situated either wholly or partially within the limits of Northumberland County, earning it the moniker the "Mother of Counties". Beginning in 1786, parts of the county were subdivided to create several other counties - Luzerne, Mifflin, Centre, Lycoming, Columbia and Union.

The village consisted of Delaware, Iroquois, Shawnee, Lenape, Saponi and Tutelo settlers, but most notably home the great Oneida Chief Shikellamy who was a supervisor for the Six Nations (from whom the land was purchased by the English). Impressions of the great chief are seen among many areas of the original Shamokin village, and there is even a rock formation above the West Branch of the Susquehanna River that can be viewed from the Sunbury side which is called Shikellamy Profile. The rocks form a human face profile, with the features of a hairline, forehead and nose being recognized most prominently, but are claimed to resemble Chief Shikellamy.

The county seat was renamed Sunbury after the town in Spelthorne, England named Sunbury-on-Thames, likely because they are comparably located along prominent rivers. Northumberland County had an economy built around its natural resources and its major cities grew in and around areas where farming was suitable, and mining and forestry work were industrious. Larger cities in Northumberland County are Watsontown, Milton, Northumberland, Shamokin, and Mt. Carmel; these cities occur along water or are located on top of the anthracite coal veins that reach into the county's eastern most municipalities.



Northumberland County Courthouse

For more information about Northumberland County and all there is to see and do, visit *www.visitcentralpa.org*.



The Edison Hotel, Sunbury

An affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

PO Box 60769
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17106-0769
(717) 526-1010
fax (717) 526-1020