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

SOME THOUGHTS ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Anthony Alu, CPE

My daughter teaches third grade. I've asked her to let me know when she comes across a student who has a job goal of becoming a tax assessor. To date, she is still looking! Let's face it, not many of us aspired to become tax assessors. This is not surprising. Most of us have come to our current position by a number of life's twists and turns. Depending on what area of the office you start at, whether it be clerical, field investigator, market analyst or administrative assistant, it will take some time to get used to the procedures and lingo of the department. Once you settle in and your confidence and knowledge grow, you're ready to take your proper place among the team.

I don't know many in the tax assessment field that have become rich by working for county government. But being a tax assessment professional has other rewards. Taxes are the life blood of government; being an assessor, you are a critical link in generating revenue. Your objective is "to be fair and consistent"; this alone speaks of the high moral value of our assessors. The education we must possess to place proper value also speaks of the dedication we need to be successful.

Depending on your position within the office you may need to get your Certified Pennsylvania Evaluator (CPE) license. Although there is no substitute for experience, this establishes the good base you need to develop and grow. You must have this license before you can set a value. The first step is to get your 90 hours of education. Attending classes based on an introduction and the three methods to value is an important step in your career development. This phase is critical to your future success not only because of the education but also because your instructors will serve as role models and mentors during your entire career. You will be attending classes with assessors from different counties and the friendships you make will last your entire life! Sharing procedural ideas and experiences with your fellow associates and attending continuing education classes will allow you to realize that, although we have the same programs, there are many ways of doing things and that communication and sharing ideas and information are a strongpoint of our association. Another important tool is the AAP list serv which gives assessors the ability to discuss and get immediate feedback on important matters.

I strongly suggest that no matter where you work within the tax assessment office that you aspire to gain as much knowledge on every tax assessment responsibility as possible. Strive every day to learn something new, develop as many friendships and professional contacts as you can and make your value known! I spent many years as a chief assessor and know the value of well-educated and engaged

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AAP Events Calendar

AAP Board Meeting
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
July 17

Fall 2020 CPE Classes
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
Intro – Sept 14 – 18
Site/Market – Sept 21 – 25
Cost – Sept 28 – Oct 2
Income – Oct 5 – 9

2020 Fall Conference
Nittany Lion Inn, State College
November 4 – Board Meeting
November 5 – 6 Conference

CPE Refresher Course
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
November 30 – December 2

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

What's Inside

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

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President's Message

Hello Everyone,

I must admit when I was elected as secretary of the AAP in 2015, my 2019-2020 term as president seemed so far off in the future, and now here it is, about to end in approximately one month. These past five years have been very rewarding and as a group, the AAP, in conjunction with CCAP and the Local Government Commission, has accomplished many goals and continues to search for ways to further our mission of education and professionalism.

COVID-19 has profoundly affected everyone globally. At this point, our everyday life seems to change constantly. The AAP made the decision early on to cancel the 2020 Annual Conference. This decision was made for the health of our members. In addition, had we not made the decision at that time, the financial loses to our association would have been greater. As a board we are discussing possible ways to move forward with our meetings, elections, continuing education and award presentations.

Of course, the live Board of Assessment Appeals training scheduled for early April likewise had to be postponed. CCAP and the AAP will be prepared to offer this training at a later date. We are hoping for a legislative reprieve to extend the deadlines.

I really want to thank CCAP staff, Local Government Commission Staff, our Education chairs, Board of Governors members, BOAA instructors and fellow officers for all you`ve done to see our association through this time. Within this *Journal* you will find an update from our Executive Director Terry Cochran regarding our plans for the items mentioned above.

A few remaining Local Government Commission assessment legislation bills are still being considered at the time of this writing. Senate Bill 491 and House Bill 1032 would provide for the appointment of two Certified Pennsylvania Evaluators to the State Board of Certified Real Estate Appraisers. This legislation is of great importance to our group as we have had no representation on this board for many years. Senate Bill 492 and House Bill 1033 provide for the qualifications and training of revaluation company personnel and CPE's, and finally, Senate Bill 493 and House Bill 1034 amend the Consolidated County Assessment Law to further provide for submission of building and demolition permits and substantial improvement information. This legislation would allow for the creation of a county improvement certification form to be used by all persons making substantial improvements regardless of whether a building permit is required.

In closing, I would like to thank all AAP members, including those committee chairs and members, the Board of Governors, my fellow executive officers, the Local Government Commission and CCAP staff for their support and encouragement. It has been my honor and privilege to serve in this capacity. I hope everyone stays safe and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Mark
AAP President
Mark Kellerman



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,* any remaining vestiges of winter may be figments of our imagination 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.

Approximately 58 percent of the way into the 2019/2020 Session, the following legislation has been introduced: 2227 House bills, 792 House resolutions, 1010 Senate bills and 311 Senate resolutions. Of course, not all this activity is assessment or tax claim related – 47 House bills and 26 Senate bills will potentially impact our professional lives. Since the prior Legislative Update as of December 5, 2019, there has been limited activity due to significant organizational transition following last year's general election.

Please read on for an update on several matters of possible interest…

Act 5 of 2020 (House Bill 330)

This amendment largely makes technical corrections, modifying what sections are referenced. It also repeals the provision that requires school boards to appoint a local tax study commission.

Senate Bill 491/House Bill 1032/ House Bill 21

House Bill 21 was originally introduced in March 2019 and among other provisions, proposed to put home inspectors under the authority of the State Board of Certified Real Estate Appraisers and expand board membership to include multiple licensed home inspectors. House Bill 21 was at cross-purposes with House Bill 1032 and Senate Bill 491, which proposed to expand Board membership to include two CPEs. House Bill 21 was amended on 10/29/2019 to reconcile the matter of board membership, proposing the addition of one CPE and one licensed home inspector. The amended House Bill 21 passed 176-22 on 10/30/2019 but is likely to lie dormant in the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee. However, Senate Bill 491 passed 48-1 on 1/30/2020 and is currently in the House Local Government Committee.

House Bill 1034/Senate Bill 493

This amendment would strengthen provisions of current assessment law on proper and timely submission of building permits to county assessment offices. It also allows for the creation of a county improvement certification form which would be submitted to the county assessment office by all persons making substantial improvements to their property regardless of whether a building permit is required. It provides for a civil penalty for those who fail to submit the form. House Bill 1034 passed 196-4 on 6/18/2019 and received its 2nd consideration in the Senate on 10/30/2019.

Note: This article was submitted on March 6.

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The *AAP Journal* is published four times a year.
Deadline for the Summer 2020 issue is June 5, 2020.

Article submissions are welcome.

Please send to:
Terry Cochran
AAP Executive Director

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AAP People & Chapter News

Northwest Chapter

The chapter's 2020 membership meetings, followed by three-hour continuing education classes, will be held on: June 26, August 14, and October 16. There will also be a seven-hour USPAP course on May 15, presented by **Wally Czekalski.** *This information was submitted before the COVID-19 pandemic. Please check with the chapter for additional updates.*

South Central Chapter

Each meeting begins with the business meeting at 9 a.m., with the seminar beginning immediately after (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.

Armtrong County

Congratulations to **Shawna Cigola**, the county's new CPE.

Veronica Zeigler is celebrating her 20th year as a CPE! Congratulations!

Butler County

Butler County would like to welcome our new director, **Amy Francis**! Although Erie County is feeling a huge loss with her departure, it is safe to say that Butler County has gained an abundance of assessment and GIS knowledge!

Columbia County

Congratulations to **David Good** who will be retiring July 3, 2020 after 35 years in the Columbia County assessment office. Enjoy your retirement, Dave!

Erie County

Congratulations to Erie County's newest CPE, **Jacob Huff**!

The county also welcomes **Shawna Puline** as a data collector; she is working on obtaining her CPE.

Indiana County

Congratulations to **Alexander (AJ) Decker** who has successfully passed his CPE exam!

Susquehanna County

Congratulations to **Britney Darrow** on passing her CPE exam in January!

Wyoming County

Congratulations to **Judy Barziloski** on passing her CPE exam November 21, 2019!

The county welcomes **Jessica Coolbaugh**, public data information specialist, and **Trina Rogers,** data collector.

Congratulations to **Pam Smiley** (13 years of service) and **Arlene Dickinson** (24 years of service) on their retirements! Enjoy your well-deserved retirements!

AAP News Send Your Chapter and County News!

Don't forget to send your county or chapter news for the Summer 2020 issue of the *AAP Journal*. Our next deadline is **June 5.**

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

Career Development

Continued from page 1

associates. Associates that want to be engaged and expand their skills are diamonds to managers. Make your county's administration realize your true value and allow your chief assessor to create ways to utilize your talents to strengthen the tax assessment team. There will be times when you will doubt your advancement, as progress can be slow; however, don't lose heart, keep a good attitude and prove you are an important member of the team, ready to help in any way you can so that when an opportunity arises, you're ready!

Chief assessors must find ways to keep their staff engaged, motivated and advancing as far as their potential will allow. We may not be dollar rich, but our riches will be counted by the professionalism that we bring to our field, our friendships, respect gained, and the comfort and contentment that we have found our calling.

Remember, career development is your job! Take advantage of every opportunity to show your commitment and skills and be proud being a member of our noble profession!

Tony Alu, CPE, is the former Luzerne County Director of Assessment and a past president of AAP. Tony has also served on many AAP committees and is currently an instructor for the AAP and its chapters.

AAP Event Updates

Over the last few weeks both AAP and CCAP have had to make many adjustments to events and have cancelled other events and trainings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here is a brief review of those events:

Spring CPE Classes: The last three weeks of the Spring CPE classes were cancelled. We will be working with the instructors to reschedule the classes as soon as possible.

AAP Annual Conference: With the cancellation of the Conference, AAP staff began working immediately to look at potential opportunities for our members to earn their recertification credits. We are looking at some possible stand alone classes plus reconfiguring the Fall Conference in November. We are also exploring online methods to hold our usual business session and vote on a new slate of officers as well as other AAP business.

Board of Assessment Appeals Training for Update: CCAP, in conjunction with AAP, made the decision to cancel these classes. We will be rescheduling the training later this year as soon as is feasible. Legislation has been introduced to extend the deadline for completion of the training.

AAP Fall Conference: The Fall Conference, scheduled for the Nittany Lion Inn in November, is still on and staff is working to possibly extend the conference to include additional classes and an awards ceremony to honor the members who would have received awards at the Annual Conference.

We will keep the membership updated on any changes to the above events.

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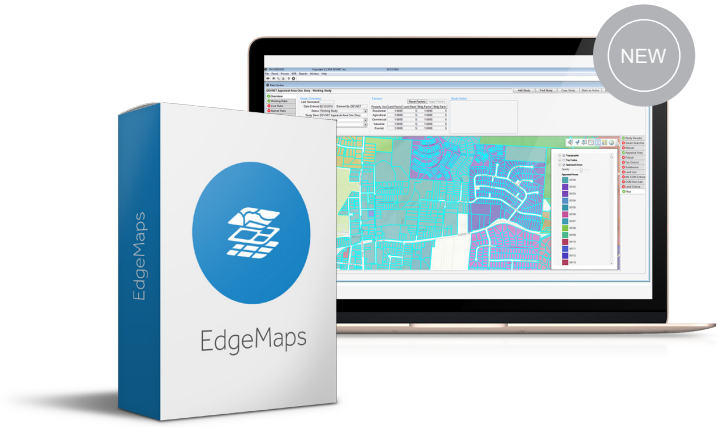
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County Corner: Somerset County

The county of Somerset was formed in 1795 from territory that had been the western part of Bedford County. The name "Somerset," taken from a county in Great Britain called Somersetshire, was initially spelled "Summerset Town," but was later changed to Somerset.

The first courthouse was completed in 1801 and was replaced fifty years later. However, in 1904, the third and final Courthouse was built and is still in use today. This beautiful building can be seen prominently by travelers on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The cost of construction was $247,000 (*This converts to about $6.5 million today*.), a decision that was unpopular with the county's residents. After its completion, all three sitting commissioners were voted out of office.

Originally, there were two courtrooms upstairs and the county row offices were downstairs. Much of the interior is Italian marble, accented with railings and light fixtures of brass, and mahogany and walnut woodwork. After extensive renovations and restoration in the years 2001-2002, the Somerset County courthouse houses three courtrooms and all court-related offices, while non-court offices moved into a new office building near the historic courthouse in 2000.

Somerset County has a long history of farming and coal mining, with many generations following in the family tradition. Today, the coal industry has seen a significant reduction in its work force. However, Somerset will always be known for a mining catastrophe that occurred on July 24, 2002, when nine miners were trapped for 77 hours in the Quecreek Mine. As the world watched the televised drama, all nine miners were rescued with the help of local companies determined to get these men out alive.

Sadly, everyone remembers where they were on September 11, 2001. Somerset County became part of that dark day's history when terrorists attacked the United States. United Airlines Flight 93 was brought down in an empty field located in Stonycreek Township, a community about 15 minutes from the Somerset County courthouse. We will always be grateful to the 40 brave passengers and crew members on board who fought back against the terrorists and gave their lives so others could be saved. That empty field has become a field of honor and is home to the Flight 93 National Memorial.

Along with the Flight 93 National Memorial, there is much to see and do within the 1,074 square miles of Somerset County. There are many historic covered bridges, as well as Mount Davis, the highest point in Pennsylvania. In fact, we are a four-season recreational playground. We have bike trails, three ski resorts, including the well-known Seven Springs Mountain Resort where we have held many AAP conferences. Seven Springs has phenomenal skiing but also many summer and fall activities such as an Alpine Slide, a clay shooting range, a zip line, and an award-winning golf course as well. There are festivals year-round showcasing locally-produced products and heritage crafts including the Pennsylvania Maple Festival in Meyersdale, New Centerville's Farmers and Thresherman's Jubilee and Mountain Craft Days at the Somerset Historical Center. We also have a winery, a brewery, and several distilleries.

Somerset is a beautiful county nestled in the Laurel Mountains. We experience some long, hard winters, but still find time to enjoy the snow and cold at our annual Fire & Ice festival and enjoy the beauty of nature on our trails and waterways in the spring and summer. We hope you will come visit us soon!



Somerset County Courthouse

Want your county to be featured in County Corner? Contact Kristin Montgomery, Luzerne County director of assessment at *kristin.montgomery@luzernecounty.org*.

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