AAP Journal
Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania

AAP
ASSESSORS' ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

Fall 2016
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CCAP COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
Serving Counties Since 1886
An affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE FIELD

By John Goshert, Chief Detective and Dennis Woodring, Detective, Criminal Investigation Division, Dauphin County

Social media and the internet have made the world different than it was 20 years ago. Citizens have many diverse views on government and its function in today's society, which is challenging for governmental employees as they perform their duties. Property assessors and related personnel have a difficult job and should be aware of potential dangers in society that may be harmful to them; everyone deserves to go home every day to their families.

There are a number of issues that can be dangerous to you when interacting with the public.

CITIZENS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS

It's estimated that over 20 million Americans are in active addiction in the United States. Drug abuse is in the mainstream and a large number of your customers, whether it is residents, homeowners or friends of homeowners, are drug users. It's important that you are able to recognize various signs of drug use and/or sales. Persons that are under the influence of controlled substances are often times unpredictable and can react negatively to interactions with government employees. They may not be able to understand or recognize that your inspections are for tax purposes and not for drug law enforcement. In addition, drug trafficking is an extremely lucrative endeavor and its illegal nature makes subjects involved extremely dangerous as they attempt to protect their drug vending operations.

CITIZENS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Everyone has experienced issues in their lives that have tested their resolve in dealing with life's twists and turns. Many citizens at one time or another have experienced mental health crises. Dealing with persons with mental health issues can be challenging and at times dangerous. Citizens that would normally be law abiding and cooperative if in mental health crisis could be dangerous to government officials.

CITIZENS WITH EXTREME VIEWS - THE SOVEREIGN CITIZEN MOVEMENT

The Sovereign Citizen Movement is a group of loosely organized individuals that believe that almost all existing government in the United States is illegitimate. A certain faction is of the belief that only county government is legitimate. A common tactic used by these groups is "paper terrorism." This tactic involves the use of fraudulent legal documents or filings as well as the misuse of legitimate documents and filings to intimidate, harass and/or coerce public officials. This tactic can result in personal liens against officials that come to the attention of these groups.

THINGS THAT GO BOOM

Situational awareness is the key to keeping you safe. Recognizing the dangers can be difficult. What is the best way to protect yourself from these potential dangers as most citizens

Continued on page 7

AAP Events

AAP 2016 Fall Conference*
November 3 - 4
Nittany Lion Inn, State College

CPE Review Class
CCAP Office, Harrisburg

• November 30 - December 2, 2016

Spring 2017 CPE Classes
CCAP Office, Harrisburg

• Introduction - March 6-10
• Site/Market - March 13-17
• Cost - March 20-24
• Income - March 27-31

AAP 2017 Annual Conference
May 3 - 5
Lancaster Marriott

AAP 2017 Fall Conference
November 2 - 3
Eden Resort, Lancaster

**Registration for the Fall Conference is now open! Please check the AAP website at www.paassessors.org.*

What's Inside

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

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President's Message

Greetings, fellow assessors,

It is so hard to believe that summer is over and we are all gearing up for the appeals and tax sale season (for the assessment offices that have the pleasure of serving both departments). Sometimes I do not know if I am coming or going. The week spent at the beach is now a fading memory.

This summer I had the pleasure of representing our great organization at the Board of Directors' and Assessment and Taxation Committee meetings at the CCAP Annual Conference. I was very pleased to hear how receptive the commissioners were when they were discussing issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis, like the appeal procedures, building permits and the recent changes with Clean and Green. One thing for sure, nobody can ever say that the assessment field is stagnant or boring!

I thought I finally had gotten off the Clean and Green "merry go round." I was pretty sure that my frequent visits to the Court of Common Pleas were over, but I'm not too sure now. I guess time will tell.

Be sure to mark your calendars for November 3 and 4 for the Fall Conference at the Nittany Lion Inn. The Conference Planning Committee has worked very hard putting together some very interesting classes, i.e. soil characteristics, understanding manufactured homes, tax assessment to tax claim, and the PA Legislative Process with our very own Executive Director Doug Hill. Now I know some of you are thinking, "What about USPAP, Act 28 and Clean and Green updates?" Yes, we will still have our good old faithful classes. Just for clarification, the "old" reference is not reflective of anyone's age!

All joking aside, it would be remiss of me if I didn't say a special "thank you" to the Conference Planning Committee and all the instructors who give of themselves to make sure we have such a great Conference.

Hope to see you all at the Fall Conference in State College.

Sincerely,

Angie

Angelia S. Tennies, CPE
AAP President



Legislative Update

By Jonathan B. Schuck, Co 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*, we will be enjoying the relative coolness of early fall weather. I hope this season is filled with events and memories that you will cherish during the ensuing winter months.

With approximately three months remaining in the 2015/2016 Session, more than 57 pertinent bills have been introduced and one enacted. As we near the end of the current Session, a host of legislation remains on the table. There is likely to be a flurry of activity in late December but only two items of note since the prior Legislative Update in June. Please read on…

Act 89 (House Bill 806)

This amendment to the Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act of 1974, approved by the Governor on 7/20/2016, includes a number of important provisions for those assessment offices that administer a Clean and Green program. Please use the below link to access the text of Act 89: http://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&sessYr=2015&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=0806&pn=2948

Pamphlet Laws Resolution No. 2 (House Bill 147)

This constitutional amendment would increase the maximum exclusion amount to 100% of the assessed value of each homestead property within the taxing jurisdiction (first introduced as House Bill 125 during the 2013/2014 Session). The bill passed 200-0 in the House 2/24/2015, passed 45-2 in the Senate 6/13/2016 and filed in Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth 6/16/2016. The legislation must be passed again during the 2017/2018 Session to amend the Constitution.

County Corner Seeking Authors!

Does your county have a "claim to fame," did something historic or unusual take place there or are there little-known facts about your county that we all should know?

We're seeking authors for our County Corner feature in each issue of the *Journal*.

If you're interested in showcasing your county, please contact *AAP Journal* editor, Larry Shubert at *larry.shubert@phila.gov.*

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Deadline for the Winter 2017 issue is December 2, 2016.

Article submissions are welcome.
Please send to:
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County Corner - Lawrence County

Contributed by Charles 'JR' Hardester, CPE, Chief Assessor, Lawrence County
Dan Vogler, Chair, Board of Commissioners, Lawrence County

Lawrence County, Pennsylvania was created on March 20, 1849 from parts of Beaver and Mercer counties due to the growth of the city of New Castle. It was named after James Lawrence, a naval officer who died during the War of 1812 and was best known for his last words "Don't Give up the Ship." The Lawrence County courthouse was constructed on Countyline Road which marked the former boundary between Mercer and Beaver counties. The current Lawrence County is made up of 27 municipalities - one city, 10 boroughs and 16 townships. The county also has nine school districts.

The county seat is the city of New Castle which is known as the "hot dog capital of the world" and the "fireworks capital of America." Its famous chili dogs are the product of Greek immigrants who came to New Castle in the early 20th century and established restaurants along with their homes. The notoriety for fireworks is credited to two local fireworks companies of international stature, S. Vitale Pyrotechnic Industries, Inc. (Pyrotecnico) and Zambelli Internationale. *The week of the Fourth of July is very popular in Lawrence County!* Historically, Ellwood City Borough would have it annual Arts and Craft Fair. Cascade Park would be filled with classic cars and downtown New Castle would light up the sky with its Annual Firework Festival where the two aforementioned firework companies would alternate years on the grand finale show.

New Castle was also home to the first Warner Brother Theatre in 1906 called Cascade Movie Palace. A Warner Brothers Museum and Entertainment Complex is scheduled to open in the Spring of 2017 which will show some of the original Warner Brother Films. New Castle was where Bob Hope had his solo performance break while filling in for the masters of ceremonies at the Capital Theater in 1928. New Castle was a part of the original rust belt of the 1950's which made it one of the fastest growing cities in Pennsylvania.

Located in the center of the county is Cascade Park, now a nature park, and host to a classic car show called "Back to the 1950's." Cascade Park was, in it's heyday, a popular amusement park with a zoo and baseball stadium. Due to economic times in the area, the park officially closed in the 1980's.

The northern portion of the county hosts a large Amish population with a dairy manufacturing plant that serves many of the Amish communities in Western Pennsylvania. Also located this area is Volant Borough, home to a former gristmill that has been converted into the Country Gift and Antique Store. This sparked a renaissance of the area and the main street now has over 50 shops and restaurants and is well-known for its four season events.

The south central portion of the county contains McConnell's Mill State Park which was home to one of the first rolling mills in the country. Located in McConnell's Mills Park is one of two covered bridges located in Lawrence County owned by the county and listed in the National Register of Historical Places.

In 1977 the borough of S.N.P.J. was separated from North Beaver Township so the society could obtain a liquor license. S.N.P.J. stands for "Slovenska, Norodna, Podporna, Jednata" or Slovene National Benefit Society. S.N.P.J. is a 500-acre recreation center located in south west Lawrence County and once held the distinction of being the least populated borough with a population of 19. During the second week of July, S.N.P.J. is home to the Slovenfest, which is a three day event that brings thousands together to celebrate the Slovenian culture.

Finally, Lawrence County was and is currently home to some very notable people such as former Pittsburgh Pirates Manager Chuck Tanner, rock legend Donnie Iris, Pennsylvania Governor Raymond Shafer and fitness guru Leslie Sansone.



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AAP People & Chapter News

North East Chapter

The chapter is proud to announce the following new CPE's - **Barb Keiper**, Monroe County, **Patricia Leach**, Susquehanna County and **Tia Robinson**, Wyoming County.

South Central Chapter

The South Central 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 Barb Walter at (717) 337-9837 for more information.

The next South Central meeting will be held December 2, 2016.

Adams County

Congratulations to **Nicholas Snyder**, Adams County's newest CPE.

Bradford County

Longtime Field Investigator **Cindy Yoder** retired May 27th after working for 25 years in the Assessment Office. She plans on spending time with her grandchildren and gardening. **Alex Novack, CPE** was hired this past January to fill a position left by another long time Field Investigator who had retired **(Melinda Brubaker**). Sadly, Melinda passed away unexpectedly a few months after her retirement. The office welcomes **Melody Bentley**. Melody has been hired as a full time Field Investigator trainee.

Dauphin County

Congratulations to **Tina Bridge**, Dauphin County's newest CPE.

Franklin County

Congratulations to **Brandi Stevens**, Franklin County's newest CPE.

Lancaster County

Lancaster County is completing final work on the county's reassessment values, which are due to be mailed to property owners Spring 2017 for 2018 taxes.

Wyoming County

Annie Shaffer, CPE was promoted to Chief Residential Field Assessor. Congratulations, Annie!

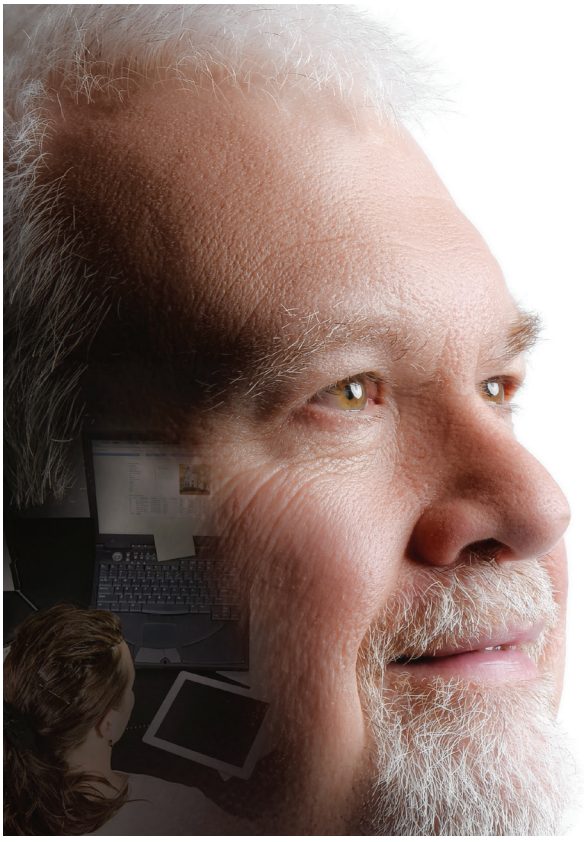
York County

Congratulations to **Ashley Scritchfield**, York County's newest CPE.

Send Your Chapter & County News!

Don't forget to send your county or chapter news for the next *AAP Journal*. Our next deadline is December 2.

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



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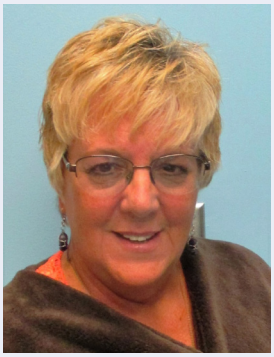
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Jeanne M. Englert

Director/Chief Assessor for Assessment/ Tax Claim/Mapping/GIS

Armstrong County

Years in assessment field: Three years but 20 years in Tax Claim. Tax Claim Director since 2001. Past President of the Tax Claim Bureau Association 2004-2006.

Marital Status and family: Married to Mark in July 2015. I have three daughters and one grandson.

What irritates me most in the assessment business: Ambiguity and inconsistency

Most people would be surprised to know: I was a paramedic for 25 years. I successfully resuscitated a former commissioner in the parking lot of the courthouse in 1999. He is still alive and kicking!

Biggest challenge as an assessor: Keeping my mouth under control

First Job: Shampoo person for a hair salon

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

If I won millions in the lottery, I would: Pay off all family debt, donate LOTS of money to Orphans of the Storm No-Kill Shelter and other non-profits. Then, buy a farm.

Favorite food and drink: Steak salad and iced tea

Favorite vacation: Surfside, South Carolina

Favorite movie: *Under the Tuscan Sun* and *Field of Dreams* are a tie!

Three people living or dead that I would invite to dinner: R. Adams Cowley, M.D. (deceased), Cyril Wecht, M.D., J.D. and J.R.R. Tolkien (deceased)

The hardest lesson I ever learned as an assessor was the time: Various meetings in the past three years (and even before) when I have referred to a specific law - people don't want to hear the truth.

If I could live in the past for one day, I would change ... Where I live. I would be in South Carolina.

My best friend: My girls and my husband

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that you interact with are law abiding. The key to keeping yourself safe is education and training. Know and understand your surroundings. Prior to going out to do your assessment, let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return. If you can, gather intelligence information about the property from coworkers and other resources.

Don't just rush into the property. When you arrive at the property, take some time to complete a mental safety assessment. You may see or experience signs on the outside that something isn't right on the inside. If it doesn't seem right to you, it probably isn't. Return another day.

Are you detecting any unusual odors? Are you experiencing any physical symptoms such as watering eyes, difficult breathing, is your skin burning? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you might have encountered some type of drug or explosive clandestine lab.

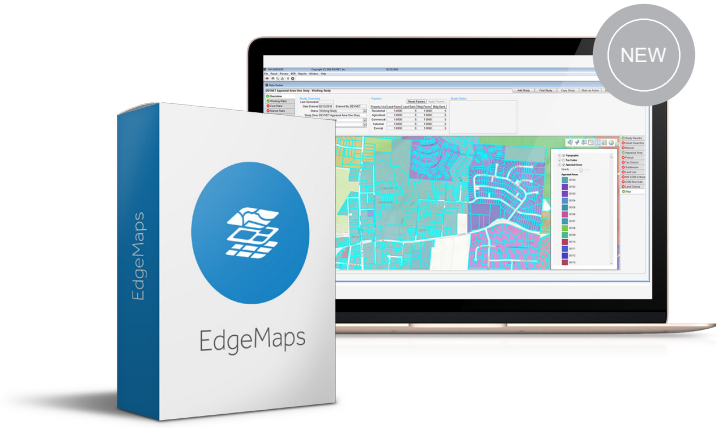
If you are on the outside and experience any of these symptoms, get upwind and away. If you entered the structure and experience any of the symptoms, get out the same way you entered. Don't turn any lights off or on. Never unplug or shut off anything that may be plugged in or running. If the symptoms persist, seek medical attention immediately.

NOW WHAT? HOW TO DEAL WITH THESE SITUATIONS

Other governmental functions have expertise in these areas and are available to educate you on dealing with these situations. Law enforcement agencies are available to provide information on substance abuse, drug identification and interaction with citizens with extreme views. Mental health professionals and crisis intervention workers are available to provide training on recognizing and interacting with persons with mental health problems. Hazardous material teams and/or local fire companies are available to educate you on these subjects.

Your safety is your responsibility, please take advantage of these available resources to make sure that you go home every day.

John Goshert, Chief Detective, and Dennis Woodring, Detective, from the Criminal Investigation Division of Dauphin County are frequent instructors for AAP Conferences on different security topics.



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