

The mission of the Ad Valorem Division of the Oklahoma Tax Commission is to promote an ad valorem property tax system which is fair and equitable to all taxpayers by implementing standard valuation methodology, tax law conformity, and assessment administration compliance.

Oklahoma Ad Valorem

FORUM

Director's Notes:

Happy New Year 2009 from the Ad Valorem Division.

We're looking forward to a good year in 2009. IMHO, 2008 wasn't exactly a super great year, but it's my hope that 2009 will make up for last year. (IMHO as all text message people know is "in my humble opinion".)

I don't know if that wish is out of clear-eyed optimism, or we just don't have any other choice. I was looking back through the previous newsletters for January, and it was a little scary. In 2007, we had the "Big Chill" after a terrible ice storm cancelled a lot of meetings and Cimarron County had over 20 inches of snow. In the 2006 newsletter, the main topic was a severe fire season, and in 2005, our main disaster was how our state teams did in the bowl games. For 2009, who knows what's ahead, but—disaster or not—we can handle it.

January is always a busy time of year for county assessors and deputies. We have the start of the ad valorem calendar, lots of taxpayers in the office, county visits (a statutory requirement that dates back to statehood), and the beginning of appraisal and homestead exemption season. It is a lot of work, but it is usually a positive experience for the county assessor, their staffs and taxpayers.

The Ad Valorem Division is working on a number of items. We have the Personal Property Schedule mailed, and it is out on the street. We're also wrapping up inspections on five-year exemptions, preparing for the legislative impact studies, and starting our equalization study for 2009. Thanks to everyone for their assistance on our recent survey of county assessors on changes to the assessment cap.

We're meeting with the County Assessors Association officers and leadership to review some rule changes. In addition, our review of public service valuation process continues. We are planning a capitalization rate conference on March 26 and 27, 2009.

The Ad Valorem Division has sent out the letters of improvement for 2009. If your county received one, please review it carefully. It is our hope that the letter will clarify areas of concern before those issues become compliance problems. So please look at these letters in the spirit in which they are offered: a way to address possible compliance issues early in the process.

We've had a good year and look forward to the continued good working relations with Oklahoma State University and the County Assessors' Association. As we've always said, a good solid partnership between these groups helps everyone in the ad valorem system and provides better service for state taxpayers.

Thanks to everyone and Happy New Year. Good luck with your New Year's resolutions. It's better to make a resolution and keep it for a while than not to have made one at all. (Unless of course, it is a bad resolution in the first place.)

Jeff Spelman, CAE, Director, Ad Valorem Division

P.S. "If you want to get something done, take care of the minutes and the hours will take care of themselves." Anwar Caddo, Ad Valorem Philosopher, borrowed from Philip Dormer Stanhope.



We have scheduled the next ArcGIS class at the CLGT computer lab in Stillwater for March 24th - 26th. We will use ArcView to edit parcels and create subdivisions in this free class. The classroom has seating for 12, so it will fill fast. Please register for the class through the CLGT website: <http://clgt.okstate.edu/Secondary%20Page%20Layout/atapschedule.htm>.

Once again, we are using the CLGT computer lab because it has licenses for ArcView installed on every computer. We still offer MIMS training on-site. If you want to host a regional training class for ArcGIS or MIMS, let me know!

(In the interests of being a “greener” agency, we are recycling the following quote. It is from the January, 2001, “Mapping Minute”.)

Remember: *The only dumb mapping question is the one not asked!*

Find It on the OTC Webpage

Forms and guidelines are being updated on the Ad Valorem Section of the OTC webpage.

The 2008 revision to Form 538-H is available in the Ad Valorem forms section as well as in the Individual Income Tax section.

Ad Valorem Tax Laws – 2008 Update is available. These tax laws are being reprinted in their entirety and will be provided to the county assessors soon.

Mark Your Calendars

The dates for the spring district meetings of the County Assessors Association have been set by the district chairs.

- **May 1:** NW District Meeting (Eloise McCully, Kingfisher County)
- **May 8:** SW District Meeting (Evelyn Bradley, Garvin County)
- **May 15:** SE District Meeting (Stan Lyles, McCurtain County)
- **May 22:** NE District Meeting (Lisa Melchior, Mayes County)

Watch for more information which will be forthcoming in April.

CODA Winter Conference

The County Officers and Deputies Association will host its winter conference at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City. The dates for the conference are February 10 – 12, 2009.

In Memorium

Rod Biddle, former Tulsa County Deputy Assessor, passed away on January 25, 2009. Rod had previously been an active member of OATR in which he served for several years as a tax representative for Mapco in Tulsa.





New Year Brings New Laws in Oklahoma

01-02-2009 - The Associated Press

Hunting and fishing licenses that last longer and cigarettes that are less likely to cause fires are among the things 2009 has in store for Oklahomans because of new state laws.

A law that took effect Thursday will allow the state Department of Wildlife and Conservation to sell licenses that will last five years instead of only one. The agency hopes the change will create a boost in revenue while also making it easier for hunters and anglers who otherwise had to renew their licenses each year.

“We’ve done a lot of research and found that a lot of our fishermen and some hunters buy a license two out of three years,” wildlife department spokesman Nels Rodefild said. If those people instead bought a five-year license, it would raise more money for the agency.

A one-year license cost \$25. A five-year license for either sport will cost \$88.

Other laws that take effect with the start of the new year require only “fire-safe” cigarettes to be sold in Oklahoma, establish a \$1,500 tax credit for purchasing cars that run on alternative fuel and provide aid to the state’s aerospace industry.

A law dealing with electrical service for people in areas that have been annexed also takes effect, although it is expected to be challenged in court.

The cigarette law, which has been enacted in 39 states, allows wholesalers to only sell cigarettes that are wrapped in paper that prevents it from burning if it is left unattended. The so-called “fire-safe” cigarettes have two safety strips of less-porous paper that will put out embers if the cigarette is not puffed while it is burning through them.

According to a report released by the National Fire Protection Association in November, about 780 deaths and \$606 million in property damage were caused by fires ignited by smoking materials in 2006. “Anything that prevents (fires) and eliminates that potential damage is a huge benefit,” said Tulsa fire Capt. Michael Baker. “Everything from grass fires to apartment building fires, you never know, it could be a result of a carelessly discarded cigarette.”

Aerospace companies will benefit from another new law providing incentives for up to five years for hiring engineers from Oklahoma, while electric utilities will be allowed to expand services to pockets of customers in areas that have been annexed into municipalities.

The city of Edmond and the Oklahoma Municipal League have claimed that state law requires such an expansion to be approved by a vote of the residents.



Personal Property News

In December, 2008 the following valuation materials were mailed to each county.

- 2009 Business Personal Property Valuation Schedule (yellow book)
- 2009 Business Personal Property Guide (blue book).

These materials are to assist the assessors and deputies in the valuation of business personal property. Current adjustments to the schedule and guide reflect the typical market conditions for January 1, 2009.

If you have questions or need to request extra copies of these publications, contact the Ad Valorem Division at 405-319-8200.





Have You Paid Attention to Your Backup Today?

Unfortunately, this is one of the most important, yet also one of the most neglected areas of computing. Backing up your data should be at the top of your DAILY computer maintenance list, right next to virus protection. Without data backup or virus protection, you are running the risk of losing your data. And it will happen. Don't think that you don't have to worry about it.

Why Should You Backup?

Data loss can happen in many ways. One of the most common causes is physical failure of the media the data is stored on. Your file server hard drive will not live forever. "There are only two types of hard drives - the ones that have failed and the ones that will fail." Yes, normally hard drives will live for years without incident. But eventually they will die. It might happen gradually, by more and more bad clusters accumulating until most of the drive is unusable. Or it might happen suddenly, the hard drive just dies without warning.

Another possible cause for data loss is power failure or spikes. It can result in loss of the entire hard drive because of a power surge.

Also worth mentioning is data loss through virus attacks. There are plenty of nasty computer viruses out there that will delete files on an infected machine. That's why virus protection on all desktops is also important.

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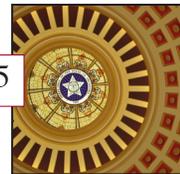
Two Assessors Retire

Sandra (Sam) Proctor White is retiring from her position as Mayes County Assessor. After nearly 30 years of service, Sam's last day in office will be January 30. Rumor has it that some of her plans include spoiling of a new grandson.

Denise Heavener will be retiring as Cleveland County Assessor effective February 28. Denise has been in the assessor's office for 28 years, fourteen of which she has served as the assessor. After retirement, she plans to continue her participation on several community service committees and spend time traveling.

Congratulations to both of these assessors, and our best wishes for good health and all things enjoyable during their retirement years.





January “4C” Meeting

The County Computer Coordination Committee met on January 6, 2009, in the Ad Valorem Division for its monthly meeting.

A handout was distributed by Troy Frazier reflecting the function of the Picture Maintenance Utility Program. He covered the newly finished process of linking pictures to CAMA personal property by matching the owner ID number. He stated the program now creates a log file for use by AA to modify its internal catalog file. The program now uploads the first picture from AA to CAMA for every parcel. It reads the situs address from CAMA and adds that as a line to print on the picture. A demonstration of the program will be presented at the CODA meeting in February.

Repeatedly the legislature requests the impact of changes to the freeze percentage. Accurate data must be gathered to make valid projections. Report Writer can be used to extract the data. However, a county must have put in the cap code date, not just the cap code, to generate the property numbers. A step-by-step instruction has been provided, but some found it to be complicated. Those who have gone through the process found the number generated matched the county report very closely.

It is advised that history should be left on each parcel unless there was a good reason to remove it. If left alone, transaction dates will always be available.

Work is being done on the draw screen regarding angles. A fix is being provided for the land screen to correct it from throwing in several leading zeros in the land units.

The OTC staff is gathering documentation and putting it together in a way that new employees will find useful. Some information regarding CAMA utilities was provided at the computer classes, so it may be that some do not have all of it. Some processes have had changes including those for data entry of transfers and sales. Assessors commented they date documentation as they receive it so as to know what the latest revisions are. Some add their own notes.

Scott Warren said the counties can still maintain their pictures in AA the same way as before, if they choose. However, the current AA program will not control the size of the pictures as the CAMA utility program will. When the OTC staff comes around to install the program, the CCAP team does not have to be there at the same time. They can do that part later.

The OTC team is working on audit data extraction. Scott was working on separating out the extraction process into another program. In order for this to work properly, the 2.8 version of AA is needed.

Carol Bomhoff commented on the importance of good documentation. Even with instructions, some can get it incorrect. CCAP is working to keep on top of the updates and encourages all to keep the update information in the binder that was provided.

Veterans cannot file for preceding year's exemptions. They can, however, make application for the current year anytime during the year, even December 31. Homestead and other exemptions have filing deadlines. Only the veteran exemptions have no deadline except it must be done in that year. This will be explained at the CODA meeting in February.

Kenny Chuculate gave an update regarding the Creek Nation which will be trying to change to in-lieu payments to school districts and counties instead of a straight ad valorem tax.

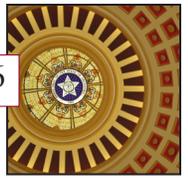
It's still agreed that when buying a new computer, one should opt for an XP instead of Vista.

The next meeting of the 4C committee will be February 10, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. at the Biltmore Hotel. This is in conjunction with the CODA winter conference.

Receive the “Forum” by Email:

To receive the “Ad Valorem Forum” by email, please forward your email address to Cyndi Heath at cheath@tax.ok.gov.





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Focus on Sequoyah County

The Sequoyah District of the Cherokee Nation was named for Sequoyah, the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet. Later the district became known as Sequoyah County. At statehood in 1907, the county already had 22,499 residents.

The county seat is Sallisaw, named from a word taken from the French word "salaison" meaning "salt provisions". The French who hunted in this area called Sallisaw Creek "Salaiseau" because of salt deposits along the streams in the area furnished salt used by buffalo hunters and early settlers to preserve meat. The city was incorporated in 1886 under the laws of the State of Arkansas in which the town was located at that time. It was incorporated under Oklahoma law in 1919.



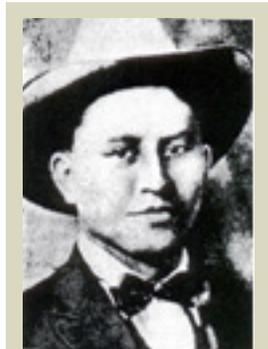
Sequoyah County Courthouse located in Sallisaw.

While cattle and grain production were the economic mainstay in early days, by 1907 cotton and corn became dominant products. Later they were surpassed by wheat and oats. In 2000, soybeans led in number of acres planted.

Little oil has been extracted in Sequoyah County but an active natural gas field has been productive. Limestone, sand and gravel are important extractions.

Recreational areas include Blue Ribbon Downs (the state's oldest professional horse-racing track and first pari-mutuel track), Lake Tenkiller, Robert S. Kerr Reservoir and a portion of the Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge.

A notable county resident was Sequoyah County Deputy Sheriff Perry Chuculate, grandfather to Kenny Chuculate of the Ad Valorem Division. On August 27, 1926, Sheriff Chuculate was shot and killed at the edge of Sallisaw. He and another deputy stopped a speeding car and as they approached it, the occupants exited and opened fire with rifles. The car was occupied by a gang of bank robbers led by the Kimes brothers who had just committed a robbery. The two brothers were sentenced to 25 years in prison, but Matthew Kimes escaped and continued on his crime spree until his recapture in 1927.



Deputy Sheriff Perry Chuculate was gunned down by bank robbers at the age of 34.

Other prominent county residents included Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd, country recording artist Cal Smith, basketball star Bryant "Big Country" Reeves, and 1995 Miss America Shawntel Smith.



Sequoyah County Demographics

Population: 40,578

Area: 678 square miles

2007 Real Property Assessed Valuation: \$111,435,144

2007 Personal Property Assessed Valuation: \$29,733,084

