



Ad Val Advisor

The Newsletter
for Wyoming
Property Tax
Appraisers

- Inside: ♦ Note from the Administrator ♦ Mainframe Shut Down ♦ Appraisal Services Group Duties
 ♦ Customer Support Issues ♦ RealWare & NOV's ♦ Veteran Database Q & A ♦ And more.....

Property Tax Division Newsletter
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From the Administrator

We're Back!

After a several month hiatus from publishing the Ad Val Advisor, we are resuming our more-or-less monthly publishing schedule. With all of the staff's normal duties, along with a particularly aggressive education and CAMA deployment schedule during the last few months, available staff time to write, compile, and publish articles has been pretty limited. Still, communication is an important part of our mission, and the Advisor is an important communication tool, so I wanted us to get back to a regular publishing schedule. So, here we are.

A lot has happened over the last few months, with more to come. I'll hit a few highlights here. We now

have fifteen counties deployed on the CCI CAMA system. The count-down for the remaining eight begins with resumption of deployments in April. By fall, all counties should be deployed. GIS integration implementations won't be far behind. By January, 2007, the conversion should be complete. That promises to be some kind of record for the number of deployments of a distributed CAMA system throughout a state. The hard work of Division staff, Assessors and their staffs, and the crew at CCI has made this rapid and successful implementation successful to date. We're starting into the home stretch.

The Division is also moving forward on a long-stated goal of mine to improve and enhance our educational offerings. The SPSS/LEA class developed and ably taught for the Division by Brenda Dones from the Weld County Assessor's office has been held twice, with a third offering coming later in the year.

CCI has kindly provided the computer equipment necessary to allow "hands-on" training in this class. The Division-developed and taught Agricultural Land and Rural Structure Valuation class has also been held once, with another offering coming later this year. Thanks to Jeff Moore, Joyln Stotts, and Dave Chapman from the Division for successfully preparing and teaching the first comprehensive "Ag" class to be taught by the Division in a number of years.



CCI and DOR have also collaborated on a CCI "follow-up" training class for deployed counties that has been well-received. Here at the Division we are working on additional workshop and course offerings. We will continue to sponsor IAAO courses, as well.

The last few months have also been a time where we have said goodbye to old friends in our assessment "family" and greeted new friends entering new roles in our ranks. Death once again visited us, with the passing of Lynda Chaffin in December. Lynda was a long-time member of the Wyoming assessment community, serving since 1999 as Platte County Assessor. She will be greatly missed. Al Wright was appointed to replace Lynda. Al worked a number of years ago for the Albany County Assessor's office. We welcome Al back to the assessment profession. Darrell Stubbs, Carbon County Assessor retired at the end of 2005, after serving 31 years as Assessor. We wish Darrell the best in retirement. Sheryl Snider was appointed as his replacement. Sheryl has worked in the Carbon County Assessor's office for several years and we welcome her as the new Assessor. Kurt Kremke resigned as Weston County Assessor last fall to return to his native state of Nebraska. We also wish him well in his new endeavors. Tina Conklin, who has worked in the Weston County Assessor's office for some time was appointed as his replacement. We also welcome her to the assessors' ranks.

The next few months promise to be exciting. The Wyoming Legislature is currently in session. It's



almost certain we will see some changes in Wyoming property tax law emerge from the session. CAMA deployments, as mentioned earlier, will continue. The Division is currently reviewing our rules—and, as I mentioned at the Assessor's Association meeting in Casper last month, most of the Chapters affecting property assessment will probably see revision this year.

So, in short, we've been busy and we're going to stay that way. But, as old friends used to tell each other before the days of e-mail, cell phones, "instant messaging", message boards, and the like, "You need to write more often!" So, we will!

Wade W. Hall
Administrator
Property Tax Division

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Customer Support

There have been several questions regarding the customer support structure before, during and after conversion into RealWare. Presently, there are several options for support that depend solely on where you are in the process.

Pre Conversion through Conversion

The primary method for customer service during this period is straight forward. All questions and requests for mainframe assistance should be directed to Jack Rehm throughout the conversion.

All RealWare conversion questions should be entered on the Issues List on the Wyoming CAMA System Home Page. This will ensure that all questions are tracked and answered in a timely manner. You can reach this website at

<http://wyocama.sharepointsite.com>.

General questions may also be directed to the CCI/PTD project managers, Ko Clifton and David Chapman.

Post Conversion/Go Live

Once a county has been through their final conversion and they are now live on RealWare, all customer support questions will need to be routed through CCI's customer support network which may include the creation of a Parature ticket. Parature is the customer support infrastructure that CCI uses to track issues.



In this capacity, CCI will be triaging a wide variety of issues. So what is triage? In this context, it is a process for sorting out customer support issues based on their need and getting that request to the right people for resolution. For example:

1. **RealWare Support** – CCI will process all software support for the full suite of RealWare products. This includes all first contacts on issues that may eventually evolve to include third party software vendors such as Oracle, ESRI, SPSS, etc. Regardless of where the support call may end up, it will all start with that first call to the CCI Customer Support group.
2. **Appraisal Support** - The direct support of appraisal related issues in Wyoming are best directed to Ken Uhrich and the Appraisal Services Group (see more detail on page 4). Sometimes, however, questions that are directed to the CCI Customer Support line will include software related issues that tend to be embroiled in appraisal related issues as well. In these cases, CCI will do their best to extract and answer the "software" related issues and will forward the "appraisal" related

items back to the Property Tax Division. Obviously, the coordination of these types of issues takes an extra amount of cooperation and work between CCI and the Property Tax Division, but is well worth the effort.

3. **Software Enhancements and Additions/Deletions** – As customer support questions are triaged by CCI, requests for software enhancements oftentimes are identified. These types of requests are forwarded back to the CAMA/GIS section where they are added to the project website. These types of requests then are forwarded to the Assessor's RealWare User Group where the enhancements are voted on and prioritized for importance. Once the User's Group is finished reviewing these types of items, the CAMA/GIS section will finalize the requests based on available funding, scheduling, etc.

Visibility to Parature

One of the ongoing issues with the conversion to RealWare has been the Property Tax Division's inability to review Wyoming Parature tickets. This limitation emerged in Wyoming due to the complex nature of deploying a Statewide CAMA system. Under normal conditions, each jurisdiction would only see their own customer support tickets. However, in Wyoming, there are some real benefits for the PTD to see issues across county lines and attempt to help coordinate more long term solutions to the issues we encounter. To this end, CCI is presently working on a solution to this problem.

Conclusion

Customer support for the CAMA systems are changing.

Historically, all CAMA related support questions started here at the Property Tax Division. Today, with the implementation of RealWare, CCI now becomes a critical component in the customer service process.

So, if you are looking for assistance with RealWare, start with a call to customer support. If your inquiry ends up being more complicated than just a software question, don't worry. Through our triage efforts, CCI and the PTD will collectively get you to the person that can help get your questions answered.

David Chapman
CAMA/GIS Manager
Property Tax Division



Complete Mainframe Shutoff

Another chapter is about to be completed in this historic CAMA conversion novel. The day of the completion of the legacy systems is drawing nearer. By February 28, 2006, all the counties that have been converted, except for Albany, Goshen and Converse County, will have their entire CAMA data backed up on tape. Clyde Barker has spent the last couple of weeks writing programs to off-load appraisal data from the central mainframe computer. This appraisal data will be transferred to a tape and stored at an off site location.

After this process is done we will be able to work with A & I to shut the legacy systems off permanently. Clyde and DOR will no longer have direct access to the converted counties legacy CAMA data. This process will be done one more time after the completion of the

last CLT or WYS counties have been converted.

Why is this being done? Well the first reason is the cost savings. The Property Tax Division pays A&I large monthly payments for the use and storage space of their central computer. Secondly, since the converted counties are now using the RealWare system for their appraisal needs there is no reason to continue maintaining static data on the mainframe.

So, as we lift a glass, say a few good words and send this legacy system into retirement, let's close this chapter of appraisal history and start another exciting chapter. One thing is for sure, this next chapter won't be dull!

If you have any further questions please contact Jack Rehm @ 307-777-5313.

Jack Rehm
Principal Appraiser
Property Tax Division



RealWare & Assessment Schedules/NOV's

We are now on the "home stretch," of our statewide CAMA conversion. Currently, 15 of our 23 Wyoming Counties have converted to RealWare. At press time, an additional 3 counties will be in the process of converting. While this is excellent news for the entire State of Wyoming, converting to a new software system (statewide) does not come without challenges. As many of the converted counties will attest, there are a variety of challenges associated with learning and implementing a new software package. It is, therefore, important that each county continue to strive for creative new ways to improve their business practices. This will require

all parties involved in this process to step outside of their comfort zone and "think outside the box."

This year's NOV (for offices currently running RealWare), is a prime example of the challenges confronting us. Based on decisions made during pre-conversion meetings, only current values were converted from the county's legacy system to RealWare. However, Wyoming Statute requires the assessment schedule to contain the previous year's market value, taxes and mill levy. For offices running RealWare this means that data needed for their NOV will need to come from a source external to RealWare (at least for this first year).

This need for external data has necessitated an *ad hoc* approach to this year's NOV. The Property Tax Division has offered assistance to all of the converted counties to make this a successful process. The PTD has offered, in cooperation with county staff, to help pull together any external data that each county may require to meet their taxpayers' needs. The PTD will also help each county to create a central location to store all NOV data. This could include, for example, the use of Microsoft Access in combination with RealWare. That data can then be sent to a variety of places to print the actual NOV. For example it could be downloaded to a county admin system and printed from there, sent to a contract company to be printed, sent to a Microsoft Access report or merged with a Microsoft Word document.

The important point here is that each County Office will have creative freedom (as long as Statutory & PTD requirements are met) to design the NOV to meet their specific needs. The PTD will be more than willing to assist in this process, and in fact has already created sample NOV documents to give each Assessor a starting point. However, it is important to note that as the *ad hoc*



NOV document becomes more specialized, it moves farther away from the NOV that is delivered with RealWare. As a result, it is vital that the county staff take an active role in the design of their *ad hoc* NOV. This is especially important if the Assessor chooses to continue to rely on the *ad hoc* NOV in the future.

This process definitely poses a significant challenge for everyone involved. The PTD acknowledges these challenges and is willing to offer assistance where it is needed, to make this a successful process. However, this might be an excellent opportunity for all parties involved (the converted counties and PTD) to evaluate their business practices. Moving to this new CAMA system provides everyone a chance at a "fresh start." By thinking outside of the box we all have the opportunity to improve our business practices and better serve our customers.

If you have any questions regarding the *ad hoc* NOV process please call David Ray at (307) 777-5325.

David Ray
Appraiser
Property Tax Division



Appraisal Services Group Coordinator Duties

In order to provide a higher level of quality service to counties, taxpayers, the Department of Revenue and outside agencies, the Appraisal Services Group (ASG) has undertaken a restatement on points of contact for ease of assistance in appraisal related matters, issues or questions. The rationale for this delegation is not a reshuffling of duties as each

individual's primary responsibilities have not changed, but to provide you with timely and quality assistance as you perform your daily assessment functions. ASG staff has discussed this concept and feel it will better serve you, the clients in the long term. Our objectives are as follows:

1. To have a direct point of contact, e.g. coordinator for you to access on questions or needs. If the matters require an ASG team member approach, the coordinator shall expedite the process of research, preparations and feedback to responses.

2. The direction is to provide more concentrated appraisal expertise to the subject requests with open lines of communications.

3. To give assistance whether that be via telephone, fax, email or on-site county visitations to ease your concerns about appraisal issues or problems.

4. Finally, the overall goal is to provide each entity with accurate and appropriate appraisal practices, procedures and methodology that will be of benefit to you the client.

Those matters or questions that are CAMA/GIS/IT related should go directly to David Chapman or his staff for response. If there are cross-over appraisal issues and CAMA issues, they will be forwarded to the section supervisors for assignment, work and resolution.

Appraisal Services Request Procedure: Requests or inquiries will go directly to the coordinator, who may answer the questions immediately, if appropriate; request ASG team assistance for research; consult with the ASG Appraisal Supervisor as to policy; or present the request and background materials to the Administrator of the Property Tax Division for final determination, if necessary. Should an ASG staff member not assigned to that area of expertise be contacted with a request or inquiry, they will forward the information to the appropriate coordinator for action.

Coordinators:

Education:

Jim Felton (307) 777-5438

State Assessed Property (non-minerals):

Bob Cordingly (307) 777-5299

Public Service Commission Uniform Assessment:

Cayse Cummings (307) 777-5328

Personal Property, Oil and Gas, etc. (excludes CAMA or CCI functions):

Joyln Stotts (307) 777-5294

Local Assessment Appraising (excludes CAMA or CCI functions):

Jeff Moore (307) 777-5431

Appraisal Services Group - Assessment Supervisory Functions:

Ken Uhrich (307) 777-5232

Should you have questions regarding these changes, please do not hesitate to contact anyone listed above.

Ken Uhrich
Appraisal Services Group Manager
Property Tax Division



Veteran Database Update

More questions about the veteran database are emerging as counties make the transition to the new CAMA system. The application development has been



plagued with interruptions and unexpected delays over the last couple of years, but more time has been devoted to the project the last several weeks to speed up the process.

Because of all the good questions about the new veteran application, we'll go with a FAQ format in this update;

[“We’ve heard a lot, but seen little of this database. Can we be sure this thing will become a reality?”](#)

Yes, the application will absolutely be deployed. The reason for the apparent doubt throughout the state has been caused by the lack of resources allocated to the project. Both the DOR Property Tax Division and the Information Technology Division have had other assignments that have been of greater importance to the groups we support. Because of



our limited manpower we sought external help to finalize the programming. This process contained a few time-consuming elements as well, such as the hiring process and bringing the programmer up to speed on the business logic.

[“You said earlier that the deployment would trail the CAMA implementation – what is the plan now?”](#)

Obviously, implementing the veteran database as counties went live with RealWare became a problem since the product wasn't ready. Since we've had additional time to discuss the deployment strategy, we concluded that implementation will be easier and cleaner if we have all the counties' veteran data converted before the application is deployed.

We know for sure that we are going to run into some serious clean-up issues and reconciliation of accounts after we identify veterans who have lived in multiple counties. To implement one county at a time and shut down the database to add new counties (identify duplicates and possibly adjust account balances) is absolutely possible, but would cause a “choppy” deployment and possibly some unnecessary frustration.

[“How will I access the veteran database once it is in production?”](#)

An icon will be placed on your desktop that, by double clicking it, will launch the program via the Internet. You will then be presented with an authentication screen to access the database. Security will be set up at DOR, but Assessors will inform the Property Tax Division of who needs access, and what level of security each user shall have, including Treasurers.

[“When will the new veteran database ‘talk’ to the new CAMA system, and how will it recognize the veteran in RealWare?”](#)

At this point it is difficult to predict a date when this will happen. No time will be devoted to establish the link until the application is up and running and free of any bugs and/or functionality issues. In addition, the efforts to establish the connection have to be coordinated with CCI.

The item that will tie a veteran or widow(er) to his/her account in RealWare will be the social security number of the veteran. A property ID, such as a parcel number, will not work as a link since this information will change as the veterans and widows relocate.

[“We are in the middle of valuation and we have no time to prepare our veteran data and provide it to you in the prescribed format until our protest period is over. How will this affect your deployment plans?”](#)

There's no doubt that higher priority items must come first. We simply have to recognize that some counties will have their veteran data trickle in later than others. As long as



the counties that have submitted their data and are “ready to go” collectively accept the delays caused by resource issues in other counties, we can move forward smoothly. If necessary, the Property Tax Division will look into possible

assistance in veteran data preparation if just a few counties are holding us back from getting the “show on the road.”

[“I’m providing my veteran tables to you now. What do I do until the database comes on-line?”](#)

Make sure you take note of the date you submit your data to the Property Tax Division. Any transactions after this date will have to be hand entered after the database has been deployed. Multiple downloads may cause more problems than they solve.

[“I want to send in my data as close to implementation as possible to avoid having to reenter transactions I record in my current system. How will I know the perfect time to send it in?”](#)

It's tricky to set a date for this as well since everything will depend on the rate of data downloads coming in to DOR. Some counties can provide a download of their veteran data in the prescribed format by the touch of a button, while other counties need time to get their paper records into electronic files.

We will send out weekly updates of which counties we have received data from and loaded to the veteran database preparation master tables. This report can be used as a gauge to see how close we are in completing the conversion. If you can provide a download in the prescribed format in an instant, you are in a position to time your submission based on the weekly report. However, if getting your veteran data prepared is labor intensive, it is probably a good idea to start as soon as possible and submit the file when it is ready.

[“I’m on RealWare now – where do I enter the veteran exemption manually so it will apply the deduction?”](#)

In the Real Property Account Summary window, select the Adjustment Detail tab. Choose the Exemptions tab at center left on the page and click the Adjustments drop

down box. Select “Veteran Exemption” if the value reduction is \$2,000. Select “Veteran Exemption Override” if the value reduction is less than \$2,000 and enter the appropriate amount under Override Value at center right. The value reduction should appear as an adjustment under the Administrative Summary tab after it is saved.

If you need clarification on issues related to the new veteran database, or need another copy of the documentation on the conversion standards (prescribed formats), contact Geir @ 307.777.5432, or email: gsolva@state.wy.us.

Geir Solvang
Principal Appraiser
Property Tax Division

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CLT Deactivated Codes

(Note: This article is intended for the CLT counties not yet converted)

It was decided by the Residential committee that certain parcels were not going to be converted into the RealWare system. If a parcel had a certain Transaction Code, it could be viewed at the bottom of the AA or CAMA screen. For example “YR=2005 STAT=31”, would not be converted to RealWare.

Deactivated parcels do not maintain a value in the legacy CLT system so there was no purpose in bringing old non-valuing data into the new system. In the CLT system there are two possibilities that can occur.

1. A parcel can have an AA record without a CAMA record.

2. A parcel can have both an AA record and a CAMA record.
3. A parcel **CANNOT** have a CAMA record without an AA record.

If a parcel has any of the following Transaction Codes in the AA CLT system, they will not be converted.

Code 10 - Deactivated Record
Code 22 - Record Added Due to Renumbering

In the CAMA CLT system if a parcel has the following Transaction Code they will not be converted.

Code 10 - Deactivated Record
Code 11 - Appraisal Data Deleted
Code 20 - Skeletal Record Added to AA
Code 22 - Record Added Due to Renumbering
Code 41 - Field Code Deleted (due to select transaction)

Please take the time to review your county’s preliminary data at the test site (DOR server) to make sure any deactivated parcels did not convert into RealWare.

Please call if you have any further question on this decision.

Jack Rehm
Principal Appraiser
Property Tax Division

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Quote of the Month

"In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is."

-Yogi Berra

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Back-Up Strategies

As a reminder, after CAMA conversion the county will assume responsibility for backing up their respective CAMA databases. A back-

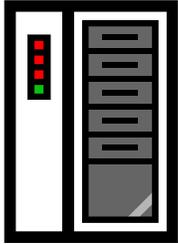


up copy of the county data is absolutely necessary in the event anything should happen to the county’s database (e.g. hardware failure, damage to the county courthouse including fire or in the event a user inadvertently deletes data). As a result, it is crucial to the county’s success moving forward in the CAMA conversion to develop and maintain a valid back-up strategy. The following are some tips and suggestions to make that process easier for each county and their respective IT staff.

Currently CCI is recommending the county Assessor’s office use an “export file” as their primary back-up source. An “export file” creates an exact copy of the data and all of the supporting files necessary to re-create the database. The process of creating this export file can easily be automated and set-up in a regularly scheduled job. That job can be set-up to run at anytime of the day or night that will meet the county’s needs. It

does need to be run on a daily basis though.

The disadvantage of using an export file over other back-up procedures is that it will take a little more time to restore the entire database, if necessary. The advantages of the export file are that it will allow a "custom" restore of segments of the data and the export file can be created while the database



is up and running. The first advantage means that if a user inadvertently deletes one table from the database, the county can use the export file to restore that one table rather than restoring the entire database. The second advantage is most important to our counties here in Wyoming. In order for the Department of Revenue to "push-out" any state assessed values or table maintenance changes to the county, the database has to be up and running 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. The DOR needs to be able schedule these "push-out" export jobs at a time when it won't affect the county's daily functions.

In addition, as many of you may have heard, the DOR has a nightly job scheduled to pull a historical snapshot of the counties data into the DOR's DataMart. However, it is important to understand that this is an incomplete snapshot and under no circumstances can it be relied upon as a back-up strategy for the county. It would not be possible to recreate the county's database using this historical snapshot.

There are several options on how to ensure the security of this export file. One option is to store the export file on the local county network and back it up with the rest of the county network resources as a part of the county IT's normal back-up strategy. If the county does not have a current back-up strategy for backing up network resources on a nightly basis, the server provided by the DOR includes a tape back-up drive that can

be used for this purpose. Depending on the size of the database, another option is to download the export file to some form of media, for example a dual-layered DVD. The best strategy on protecting the county's export file should be discussed with the county's IT staff. However, whichever strategy the county uses the DOR highly recommends that, at some pre-determined interval (e.g. once-a-week or once-a-month), the county store the media containing the export file offsite. This only helps to ensure that, in the event of some disaster (e.g. fire, flood or tornado), the county has a valid back-up of their data. Again, it is best to discuss these options and develop a strategy in cooperation with the county's IT staff.

David Ray
Appraiser
Property Tax Division

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Annual Capitalization Rate Meeting

The Appraisal Service Group will conduct the Annual Capitalization Rate Meeting on March 15, 2006. The meeting will start at 8:30 A.M. in room 1699 of the Herschler Building. This meeting is open to industry

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representatives, county officials and the public. State Assessed Industries will also make capitalization rate presentations and make comments relative to their utility or railroad business. Industry studies are done in house or by consultants (many are nationally known). The State of Colorado Property Tax Division plans on attending the

meeting as well to gather information for their cap rate meeting later this year.

Robert Cordingly
Principal Appraiser
Property Tax Division

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Upcoming Property Tax Division Sponsored Education

03/16/06 – 03/17/06
CCI/DOR Follow-Up Training
(For 2nd tier of counties being implemented)
Cheyenne, WY

For information on classes, please contact
Jim Felton at (307) 777-5438, or
email: jfelto@state.wy.us