

Centralized Property Tax Administration Grant Program

ASSESSMENT STUDY



Ontario County, New York



The GOAL:

- ◆ EQUITY – All properties are assessed fairly
- ◆ CONSISTENCY – Standardized assessment practices between assessing units
- ◆ TRANSPARENCY – The system is generally understood by taxpayers
- ◆ EFFICIENCY – Lowest cost for a given level of service

Standards

Common treatment of all parcels in the county

- Common Level of Assessment
- Common Database of Assessment, Inventory and Valuation Data
- Consistent Assessment Administration Standards
 - Common Reassessment Cycle
 - Common Sales Verification
 - Current Inventory

Study Group Members

- ◆ Supervisor Kristine Singer, Town of Canadice
- ◆ Supervisor Lloyd Kinnear, Town of Canandaigua
- ◆ Robin Johnson, Director OC RPTS
- ◆ Sylvia Staples, OC RPTS
- ◆ Mark Brown, Assessor – City of Canandaigua
- ◆ Don Collins, Assessor – Town of Canandaigua
- ◆ Joe Muscarella, Regional Director, ORPS
- ◆ Gary Drake, ORPS Western Region

The Current System

18 Assessing Units – 2 Cities, 16 Towns

STAFF:

15 – Six Year Appointments – 7 FT, 8 PT

2 – Civil Service Appointments – Full Time

1 – Elected Board of Assessors - PT

12 – Support Staff – 5 Full Time, 7 Part Time

9 – Real Property Tax Services – Full Time

Reassessment Cycle

- ◆ 8 Assessing Units in Annual Reassessment Program
- ◆ 10 Assessing Units Complete Reassessments on a Three Year Cycle
- ◆ 2007 County Equalization Rate = 99.42
 - Fourth in the State
 - Orleans, Livingston and Clinton at 100%

Assessment Administration Structures Studied:

- ◆ County Assessing
 - Assessment Administration Becomes the Sole Responsibility of the County
- ◆ Collaborative Assessment
 - Assessment Administration Remains the Responsibility of the Towns and Cities
 - Enhanced Collaboration with the County

County Assessing

- ◆ Requires a Referendum
- ◆ Considered a Single Assessing Unit
- ◆ One Equalization Rate – Analysis of the County as a Single Unit
- ◆ Real Property Tax Services Replaced with Department of Assessment

Implementation – Year Zero

- ◆ BOS Resolution of Support
- ◆ Public Education Campaign
- ◆ Local Law and Referendum
- ◆ Further Study of Specific Operational Details
- ◆ Budget and Capital Improvement Planning
- ◆ City of Geneva Adopt Standard Assessment Calendar
- ◆ West Bloomfield Adopt Appointed Assessor Status

Implementation – Year One

- ◆ To Maintain Current Quality Standards, 26 Full Time Employees are Required
- ◆ Rent, Purchase, Build or Renovate Space Approximately 7,000 square feet
- ◆ County Hires Commercial Appraiser
- ◆ Digital Records Retention Project

Implementation – Year Two

- ◆ Prepare Technology Resources
 - Common Databases, Scan Existing Records, Convert Manual Property Sketches, Centralize RPS
- ◆ Prepare County Departments for Projected Workload Increases
 - Co Attorney, HR, IS, B & G, P & C, RAIMS
- ◆ Prepare Policies for Municipal Coordination
 - Town Boards, City Councils, Building, Zoning, Code Enforcement, Tax Collectors, Water & Sewer Depts.
- ◆ Finalize Building Space

Implementation – Year Three

◆ Centralize Offices

- Move Municipal Assessment Offices to County Office Space
- Begin Analysis for County-Wide Revaluation Project
- Data Collection and Verification
- Street Level Photo Update

Implementation – Year Four

- ◆ County-Wide Revaluation Project
 - Valuation Analysis
 - Field Review of 48,000 + Parcels
 - Wholly Exempt Status Review
 - Agricultural Exemption Review
 - Appoint County Board of Assessment Review
 - Abolish Municipal Boards of Assessment Review

Implementation – Year Five

- ◆ County Assessing Unit – Effective January 1
 - RPTS Department Dissolved and Director Position Abolished
 - Department of Assessment Created, Director and Deputy Director of Assessment Appointed
 - All Staff Become County Employees
 - Board of Assessment Review Training Conducted by ORPS Staff

Implementation – Year Five Continued...

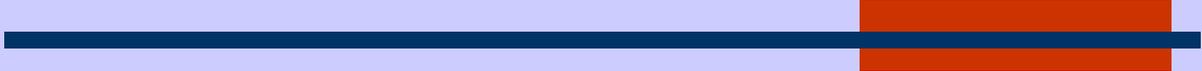
- ◆ Disclosure Notices Mailed to all Property Owners by March 1st
- ◆ Informal Hearings Held at County Assessment Office
- ◆ First County Tentative Assessment Roll filed May 1st
- ◆ First County Grievance Day held – Fourth Tuesday in May

Implementation – Year Five Continued...

- ◆ First County Final Assessment Roll filed July 1st
- ◆ ORPS Analyzes Assessment Equity and Issues a Single County Equalization Rate
- ◆ BOS Adopts Revaluation Schedule



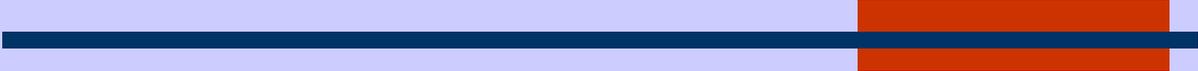
Collaborative Assessment



- ◆ Assessment Remains Responsibility of the Towns and Cities.
- ◆ All Agree to Common Standards
- ◆ Enhance Cooperative Efforts between County and Municipalities
- ◆ Common vs. Single EQ Rates



Collaborative Assessment



- ◆ General Inter-municipal Agreement
 - All Municipalities *Must* Participate
 - County Commits to Enhanced Coordination Role
 - Long Term
 - Optional Support Services Provided will be Charged to the Assessing Unit

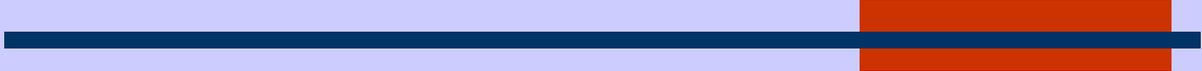


General Inter-Municipal Agreement

- Common Reassessment Cycle
- Common Level of Assessment
- Common Assessment Calendar
- Common Centralized Database
- Common Assessor Appointment Standards



Optional Support Services



- ◆ County Provides Entire Assessment Function
 - Long Term
 - Short Term
- ◆ Exemption Administration
- ◆ Data Collection / Photographs
- ◆ Commercial Appraisals
- ◆ Sales Verification
- ◆ Data Verification
- ◆ CAMA – Land Tables, Valuation Models



Optional Support Services



- ◆ Data Processing Services
 - Assessment Change Notices
 - Assessment Disclosure Notices
 - Cost Documents
 - Comparable Sales Documents
 - Inventory Data Mailers
 - Exemption Renewal Applications



Implementation – Year Zero



- ◆ BOS Resolution of Support
- ◆ General Inter-Municipal Agreement Created, Adopted by BOS and all Towns and Cities
- ◆ Amend City Charter to Adopt Standard Calendar
- ◆ Pass appropriate Local Law to Adopt Appointed Assessor Standard
- ◆ Public Education Campaign – County wide Annual Reassessment Projects



Implementation – Year One



- ◆ Planning Contingent on Volume and Nature of Optional Assessment Services Requested
- ◆ Create Necessary Positions
- ◆ Space
- ◆ Centralize RPS Database
- ◆ Assessors and County Valuation Staff Intensify Collaboration and Consensus Efforts on Valuation and Procedural Issues



Implementation – Year Two



- ◆ All Municipalities Adopt Annual Reassessment Plan and Submit Six Year Plan to ORPS for Approval.
- ◆ Assessors and County Staff Collaborate on Analysis of Sales, Neighborhoods, Market Trends
- ◆ Field Review of all Parcels



Implementation – Year Three



- ◆ Public Information Sessions Held in all Municipalities Throughout January & February
- ◆ Assessment Disclosure Notices Mailed to all Property Owners and Informal Hearings Conducted
- ◆ Tentative Assessment Rolls filed May 1st
- ◆ Grievance Day Held on the Fourth Tuesday of May
- ◆ Final Assessment Rolls filed on July 1st
- ◆ Eighteen Equalization Rates will be Issued, all at 100%

PROs

Current

- ◆ System is working
- ◆ Good Data
- ◆ All parcels reassessed on one or three year cycle
- ◆ Not a drain on ORPS resources
- ◆ Local Control, Flexible systems
- ◆ Taxpayer Convenience
- ◆ Checks & Balances
- ◆ Proactive in coordination & working relationships

County

- ◆ Better Succession Opportunities
- ◆ Consistency
- ◆ Single Equalization Rate / Assessing Unit
- ◆ Specialized Valuation Staff
- ◆ Consistent Certiorari Defense
- ◆ Long Term Equity

Collaborative

- ◆ Succession Opportunities
- ◆ Emergency Plan
- ◆ Better Consistency
- ◆ Flexible-Tailored to need
- ◆ Same Equalization Rate
- ◆ Same Reassessment Cycle, annual or biennial
- ◆ Checks & Balances

CONs

Current

- ◆ De-Centralized
- ◆ Some Inconsistencies
- ◆ Greater Challenge to Standardize
- ◆ Succession Issues – No Emergency Plan

County

- ◆ Space / Personnel Requirements
- ◆ Referendum – Public Perception
- ◆ Loss of Local Control
- ◆ Taxpayer Inconvenience
- ◆ Inter-Municipal Information Exchange
- ◆ Taxpayers are the Only Checks & Balances

Collaborative

- ◆ Requires Consensus of all Municipalities and the County
- ◆ Additional County Personnel – Commercial Appraiser, Analysis Staff
- ◆ Offset Costs by Chargebacks to Towns/Cities
- ◆ Enforcement of Agreement

Impact on ORPS Resources

Current	County	Collaborative
No Additional or Decreased Resources Required	No Additional or Decreased Resources Required EXCEPT Board of Assessment Review Training	No Additional or Decreased Resources Required

Estimated Cost Comparison

Current	County	Collaborative
<p>◆ \$1,818,275</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does not include assessment defense costs or state aid revenues. ◆ Does not include RPTS revenues 	<p>◆ \$1,900,560 Department of Assessment</p> <p>◆ \$ 552,000 Other Departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assessment defense costs included in Other Depts ◆ Estimated Implementation costs of \$1,505,000 	<p>◆ \$ 1,893,475</p> <p>Includes Cost for Commercial Appraiser (Salary & Training)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Other costs as service / need requires. (Costs charged back to Towns/Cities)

Estimated State Aid

Current	County	Collaborative
<p>◆ \$ 162,673</p> <p>Three year average to municipalities of Annual and Triennial Reassessment Aid Payments</p>	<p>◆ \$ 228,500 Annual Reassessment Aid (\$5.00 per parcel)</p> <p>◆ \$ 338,100 One time Consolidation Aid (\$7.00 per parcel)</p> <p>◆ \$ 91,400 One time grant payment on successful referendum (\$2.00 per parcel)</p>	<p>◆ \$ 228,500 Annual Reassessment Aid to municipalities (\$5.00/parcel)</p> <p>◆ \$ 45,700 One time payment to county for coordinated assessment services (\$1.00 per parcel)</p>

Goal Achievement Comparison

EQUITY and CONSISTENCY

Current

- ◆ County EQ Rate
99.42% - 4th in State
- ◆ All Use RPS Software
- ◆ 17 on Standard
Assessment Calendar
- ◆ 17 employ Appointed
Assessors
- ◆ All perform cyclical
reassessments
- ◆ County Revaluation
Support Available

County

- ◆ Single EQ Rate
- ◆ Single Consolidated
RPS Database
- ◆ One Assessment
Calendar
- ◆ One Assessing Unit
- ◆ One Assessor
- ◆ Civil Service Staff
- ◆ County Adopts one
Reassessment Cycle

Collaborative

- Common EQ Rate
- All Use RPS Software
- All use Standard
Assessment Calendar
- 18 Assessing Units
- 18 Appointed Assessors
- All reassessments
projects on same cycle
- Enhanced coordination
/ support

Goal Achievement Comparison

TRANSPARENCY

Current

- ◆ No Assessing Unit Villages
- ◆ 17 Use Standard Calendar
- ◆ 15 of 18 EQ rates at 100%
- ◆ No Large Tax Shifts or differences in Tax Rates
- ◆ Stated Level of Assessment consistently verified as EQ Rates.

County

- ◆ One Assessment Calendar
- ◆ One Exemption Application Deadline
- ◆ One Administrative Review Schedule
- ◆ Single EQ Rate
- ◆ No Tax Shifts or differences in Tax Rates where taxes are apportioned.

Collaborative

- Common Assessment Calendar
- Common Exemption Application Deadline
- One Administrative Review Schedule
- Common EQ Rate
- No Large Tax Shifts or differences in Tax Rates where taxes are apportioned.

Goal Achievement Comparison

EFFICIENCY

Current

- ◆ Timely EQ Rates
- ◆ Consistent Change in Level of Assessment Factors
- ◆ Consistent STAR Values
- ◆ Low # of Corrections
- ◆ Minimal Use of Outside Contractors
- ◆ Reporting Deadlines met
- ◆ Taxes extended on time
- ◆ Staff and Costs within IAAO standards

County

- ◆ Same as Current PLUS
- ◆ Specialized Appraisal Staff
- ◆ Little or no Redundancy
- ◆ Common Policies, Procedures
- ◆ Uniform Use of Technology
- ◆ Long Term Succession Plan
- ◆ Standard Digital Records Retention

Collaborative

- Same as Current PLUS
- Short-Term Emergency Succession Plan
- Enhanced Coordination and Consistency
- Specialized Commercial Appraisal Staff



Can the Current System be Improved?

- ◆ If the City of Geneva adopts the standard assessment calendar, that would facilitate one common assessment calendar.
- ◆ If the Town of West Bloomfield adopts an appointed assessor position, that would facilitate common assessor qualification and training requirements.



Can the Current System Be Improved?

- ◆ Adoption by all towns and cities of an annual reassessment plan would facilitate the goals of common cycles and common equalization rates.
- ◆ Addition of a Commercial Appraiser to the RPTS Staff to assist with revaluation support would facilitate consistency in that class.



Can the Current System Be Improved?

With or Without Implementation of Either of the Alternative Plans, Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration between Local Assessment Officials, Real Property Tax Services and NYS Office of Real Property Services will continue to evolve in Ontario County.



Conclusion....

No substantial long term cost savings were identified. The consensus of the Study Group is that any changes undertaken in the structure of assessment administration should not be considered on a cost basis, but rather on the quality of services provided.



Questions...



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