



# TAX WISE NEWSLETTER

Assessor  
Auditor-Controller  
Treasurer Tax Collector

*Coordinated by Ray Rasmussen*

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR

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*--By Ray Rasmussen, Auditor-Controller's Office*

Greetings from the Property Tax Administration Departments of Stanislaus County! This is the second edition of an annual newsletter sent to taxing agencies in Stanislaus County. Our goal is to produce a newsletter that will keep you abreast of developments in property tax administration in the State and locally, within Stanislaus County. The newsletter is a result of input we received from taxing agencies at a focus group session meeting held on October 25, 2001.

We trust the information provided will be useful. We'll also try to make it as interesting as possible and encourage your feedback as to how it can better meet your needs. An electronic version containing links to further information is available by contacting Denise Alarcon at 525-6596 or by e-mail at [alarcnd@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us](mailto:alarcnd@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us).

We want to meet your needs and are determined to give you the best customer service that we can possibly provide.

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### PROPERTY TAX ADMINISTRATION DEVELOPMENTS

The County has acquired a new property tax system. The CPATS system currently running on the County's mainframe computer will be retired in July of 2003. [Megabyte Systems, Inc.](#) has been selected to install their MPTS2000+ property tax administration system. They have been in business since 1980, and provide property tax systems in seventeen other California counties. We are currently working with Megabyte to convert our CPATS data into the Megabyte format. We expect to have our data online in MPTS2000+ in late February or early March. Staffs from the three property tax administration departments have been acquainting themselves with the system using test data from Napa County. We have also been visiting other Megabyte counties in our orientation efforts and also plan to attend formal training offered at Megabyte's

training center in Rocklin. We will continue with CPATS for tax roll changes and payment processing through the second installment collection period and then plan to switch to Megabyte to finish out the 2002/03 year. Our goal is to make the transition to the new system as seamless as possible for our customers. Any new system, even with the smoothest of installations, can potentially be wrought with unexpected situations that may in the short-term affect delivery of services to you. We ask for your patience and pledge to do our best to minimize any disruptions and look forward with you to the eventual increase in services we anticipate with the new system. We expect increased functionality in terms of better tracking and more timely processing. There also may be some format changes in requested reports and in the way direct assessment processing is done. The Auditor's Office is planning a presentation for Direct Assessment agencies that will give information about direct assessment processing under MPTS2000+ on February 26, 2003. We will be sending out more information on that in the very near future.

The Property Tax Division of the Auditor's Office has experienced some personnel changes. Dee Tate transferred to a position in the County Community Services Agency. Crystal Church had a baby girl and has elected to be a full time mom. Denise Alarcon has returned to work for us as Crystal's replacement and we are in the process of a recruitment to fill Dee's vacated position.

### **PROGRESS REPORT**

This past year the property tax administration departments provided a series of workshops for taxing agencies in response to the needs identified at the focus group session on October 25, 2001. The workshops were:

- Reading Financial Reports, presented by Terri Rebulcava of the Auditor's Office
- Proposition 218 and Its Implications, presented by Jack Doering of County Counsel's Office

- Redevelopment and Its Implications, presented by Jim Duval of the County Redevelopment Agency
- Property Taxes 101, presented by John Bettencourt of the Auditor's Office

Handouts from these workshops are available upon request, and Property Taxes 101 is also available in an electronic format. You may contact Denise Alarcon in the Auditor's Office if you would like to receive any of these materials.

We have been investigating how we can produce an interactive web presence for property tax administration that would meet the needs of our taxing agencies. Megabyte will give us a web presence that will allow inquiry of individual parcel information, but your needs go beyond that. We will continue to pursue avenues of providing needed information to you. That may involve transmission of reports and information by email in the interim until satisfactory Internet applications can be obtained. Please feel free to contact us (see contact information below) for property tax information or services you need.

### **NEW COUNTY ASSESSOR**

Since our last newsletter, the voters of Stanislaus County elected a new County Assessor. Doug Harms was sworn in at a ceremony on January 7, 2003. We recently sat down with Doug and asked some questions for this article.

***Tax Wise: What is the mission of the Assessor's Office?***

D.H.: The mission of the Stanislaus County Assessor's Office is to produce a fair, accurate and timely assessment roll while providing excellent customer service.

***Tax Wise: What is the vision of the Assessor's Office?***

D.H.: We don't have a vision statement for the Assessor's Office.

***Tax Wise: Do you see any changes in the vision as a result of your election?***

D.H.: Yes, we will work on a vision statement. Perhaps something like, "To make the Assessor's Office the most user-friendly agency in the County."

***Tax Wise: Were there any surprises for you after you were elected?***

D.H.: No, all the surprises happened during the campaign.

***Tax Wise: What services are available from your office that taxing agencies in the County might want to make use of?***

D.H.: Our parcel maps are now on our web site found at [www.co.stanislaus.ca.us](http://www.co.stanislaus.ca.us). We have also improved on our ability to query data related to individual taxing agencies and, in the future, I would like to define queries the taxing agencies might want and provide them over the Internet. Hopefully, our new property and tax computer system will be in production by July 2003 and it will add to our ability to provide useful information to everyone.

***Tax Wise: Do you see any significant factors in the County or the State that will impact your office and the way it deals with taxing agencies?***

D.H.: Our main priority will always be to produce a timely and fair annual assessment roll while providing excellent customer service. Budget constraints may influence the level of the services we can provide; however, our goal is to expand our services even if the State's fiscal problems are passed onto the County.

***Tax Wise: Is there anything in closing that you would like to say to the taxing agencies of the County?***

D.H.: I look forward to continuing to work with them and I know that by communicating we can improve our work processes.

## ***BIOGRAPHY OF DOUG HARMS, COUNTY ASSESSOR***



### **EXPERIENCE**

- Stanislaus County Assessor's Office – August, 1978 to present
  - Chief Property Appraiser, Administration - 1995 to present
  - Supervising Farm Appraiser – 1986 to 1995
  - Senior Appraiser – 1983 to 1986
  - Appraiser I, II and III – 1978 to 1983
- Salvation Army – 1977 to 1978
- United States Peace Corps, Nepal – 1974 - 1976

### **EDUCATION**

- Thomas Downey High School – Graduated 1969
- Modesto Junior College – 1969 – 1971
- B.A. San Jose State University – graduated 1973
- Graduate Work, International Relations, South East Asia, Ohio University
- State Board of Equalization Advanced Appraiser Certification - 1987

***BIOGRAPHY OF DOUG HARMS,***  
*Continued*

**COMMUNITY SERVICE  
ORGANIZATIONS**

- Modesto Rotary Club
- Board of Directors (President) - Stanislaus County American Heart Association
- Modesto Chamber of Commerce
- United Way Community Service Award

**PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

- California Assessor's Association
- California Chief Property Appraiser's Association
- International Association of Assessing Officers

**PERSONAL**

- Born 1951 in Modesto
- Married to Kathy Harms (Himes), Teacher at Moon School, Waterford

The Assessor's Office is available to answers all inquiries pertaining to taxation and valuation assessments. The Assessor's Office is located in Modesto at 1010 Tenth Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Suite 2400, phone number (209) 525-6461. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Do you have a question for the County about property taxes, but you're not quite sure whom to ask? Maybe we can help. Here are three people who are very knowledgeable about their respective departments and are anxious to be of assistance to you:



**Don Oppman**  
Assessor's Office  
(209) 525-7623

[oppmand@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us](mailto:oppmand@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us)



**Mary Guerrero**  
Tax Collector's Office  
(209) 525-6400

[gurrrom@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us](mailto:gurrrom@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us)



**Ray Rasmussen**  
Auditor-Controller's Office  
(209) 525-7918

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