



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

April 26, 2010

The Honorable Dale Washam
Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer
2401 South 35th Street
Tacoma, Washington 98401

COUNTY REVALUATION PROGRESS

Dear Mr. Washam:

We received your Revaluation Progress Report, and we want to thank you for taking the time to provide us with information on your revaluation work for the 2009 assessment year. This information clarifies your current status in completing your revaluation plan.

RCW 84.41.130 requires that assessors report the progress and status of the revaluation program for their county on or before October 15th. The information submitted on the Progress Report is designed to illustrate the progress an assessor is making in completing the current revaluation plan that is filed with the Department.

I am pleased to inform you that we see adequate progress by your office in completing the revaluation requirements that are outlined in your current revaluation plan for Pierce County.

Approval of the plan was subject to the completion of all revaluation work during the six-year term of your plan. Our review of the annual Revaluation Progress Report is intended to ensure that you are making adequate progress in completing your approved plan. The review is also helpful to identify areas that could place your program at risk. A revaluation program is expected to comply with state laws and rules, and a strong program requires adequate resources to complete the work.

The approval of your plan was contingent on these requirements during the course of your plan:

- Complete reappraisal of property
- Complete the physical inspection of all real property
- New construction is identified and placed on the assessment roll
- Adequate funding of trained staff
- Adequate funding of computer systems and software
- Notification to the Department of Revenue of problems or potential changes

Our review indicates that you are making adequate progress in completing your revaluation plan. However, we do include observations that were noted during our review of your report together with some recommendations.

Physical Inspection of Property

The Progress Report and supporting data you filed with us indicates that you have you completed 23 percent of the inspections outlined in the modified revaluation plan that we approved. The plan projected that 23 percent of the inspections would be completed at the close of 2009. We realize that the completion rate was lower in the first year (2008) of the original plan, and that you have significantly improved through concentrated effort in assessment year 2009. As a comparison, a revaluation plan with an equal distribution of parcels between six inspection areas would generally reflect a completion rate near 33 percent at the end of the second year in a six-year plan.

You reported completed inspections that include: inspections of 4,674 parcels that were carried forward from the 2008 assessment year (Cycle 1) and all residential inspections scheduled for the 2009 assessment year (Cycle 2). You did note that 680 commercial inspections scheduled for 2009 were not completed during that year. We are pleased to hear that after the filing of your Progress Report in October of 2009, you have completed additional inspections including the inspection of 680 commercial parcels that were carried forward from the 2009 assessment year (Cycle 2). We understand that you are currently working on the regularly scheduled inspections for assessment year 2010 (Cycle 3), and we look forward to seeing the successful completion of your goal to complete 59,322 inspections for the 2010 year.

Since the approval of your modified plan (DOR approval letter dated September 21, 2009), you have changed your projections for inspections in assessment years 2010 through 2013. These changes appear to provide an equal distribution of workload over the remaining four-year period of your plan. With 65,000 parcels scheduled for inspection in both the 2011 and 2012 assessment years, your staff will need to complete inspections at a slightly faster rate than in the past. Based on comparisons with your county's historic number of inspections per appraiser and in comparisons with other large counties, the current number of inspections per appraiser is high but not necessarily unachievable. If the current level of appraisers decreases, then the resulting increase in the number of inspections per appraiser, for assessment years 2011 and 2012, could reach a level that would put you at risk of not completing your revaluation plan. If you are able to complete the inspections scheduled for 2010, you will be better positioned to achieve success in the following years. We request that you continue to send us regular quarterly updates on the progress in completing inspections of parcels. Also, please keep us informed of potential changes in your budget that would threaten your ability to complete your inspection and revaluation work.

Adequate funding and trained staffing levels

We understand that the current economic climate has affected the availability of resources. However, it will be imperative that your office maintains an adequate level of trained staff to ensure the completion of your current revaluation plan.

Notification to the Department of Revenue of problems or potential changes

We appreciate your willingness to continue to keep us informed of your progress and the challenges faced by your office. Please thank your staff for their patience and attention to providing prompt responses to our questions. We expect this joint effort by all parties will help lead to a timely completion of your current revaluation plan.

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We commend your effort in completing the revaluation requirements as mandated by Washington State law. If you have any questions regarding the content of this letter, please contact me at (425) 356-4848 or by e-mail at rc@dor.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Rangel S. Cavazos
Revaluation Specialist
Property Tax Division

RSC:nw

cc: Kathy Beith, County Performance & Administration Program Manager