

To: All Assessor Staff

October 20, 2009

From: Ralph Baker

Subject: Staff Appreciation Lunch

Hello everyone. As we put the finishing touches on the 2009 Assessment year for 2010 taxes, I wanted to show my sincere appreciation for the outstanding work you've all done. This really has been a year of achievement for you. Some of the things you've accomplished include:

Our appraiser staff once again completed all appraisals and new construction right on schedule! This is despite the horrendous weather we had last winter!

The Personal Property staff successfully launched the new "on-line filing system". It's working well. While diverting attention to get that program launched, they completed the personal property assessments right on schedule.

Kevin completed the replacement purchase of new more powerful laptop computers for all of our appraisers.

Desiree and Toni did a complete top to bottom audit and redesign of our Open Space tax reduction programs. They did a magnificent job of getting these complicated programs properly administered. Building and Planning staff subsequently redesigned their Farm and Ag Conservation Program. It's excellent. All of the county Open Space programs are now models for other counties to emulate.

Mike, working with Information systems, created a property address program being used by our office and all of the cities in our county to quickly and accurately assign or reassign street addresses. It automatically updates our systems when county or cities update addresses. The paper chase is over!

Sometimes property owners have both farm land and forest land on one parcel. Deanna took the initiative to show Desiree and Toni how to use GIS software and our parcel map and aerial photos to digitally mark the boundaries of farm land and forest land to accurately determine the acreage of each area so that each portion can be accurately assessed.

Joyce, Eric and Teresa, worked with Information systems to create a scanning program for all senior exemption applications and supporting documents so that they can be processed and marked using the digital image rather than using paper files. This enables senior exemption staff to process applications while telecommuting without transporting sensitive documents. They did this while reducing the processing time to less than 2 weeks from receiving applications to having them fully processed!

Connie enhanced our web page by placing tax district levy resolutions, levy calculation work sheets, and levy election results certifications at each parcel's list of tax districts. This is another improvement to our commitment to transparency.

Kevin wrote several informative articles for the assessor web page to improve citizen understand of property tax issues.

We launched the only office-wide telecommuting program at the county. Because we have successfully converted to paperless processes, we can access our work from anywhere. Many of you are telecommuting regularly. Productivity has not sagged, but improved!

Our customer service staff in the courthouse receives property subdivision (segregation) requests and lot line adjustments from citizens. But those changes are processed by our GIS staff in the Monroe Court Building. James took the initiative to design a digital checklist the customer service staff can use with our customers to assure we receive all documentation and citizen instructions needed to accurately and timely process the segregation or lot line adjustment.

Nicole digitally mapped every lot of every mobile home park in our county. She hosted mobile homes to the lots so that we can better track movements in the effort to keep track of moving homes.

Eric arranged for our customer service section to appear on KHQ-6 Help Line three times to get the word out on senior/disabled exemptions and the Low Income Deferral Program.

I think our entire group has become the dynamic, innovative, hard working, dedicated staff you typically only see in the best businesses out there. It can and has happened in our government office. Every one of you has contributed! The list above is by no means everything you've accomplished! Most of the calls I get now are complimentary of you. Accordingly, as the citizen's elected representative, I want to show their appreciation for the excellent job you've been doing. I'll spring for lunch on Thursday, October 29th at The Italian Kitchen, at 113 N Bernard St. They are going to close for our special event between 11:30 and 1:30. They have asked that we not all show up at once. Remember we only have an hour for lunch. Attached is a list of available selections for lunch. To get us all in and out between those times, they asked me to provide the list of what each person would like to order. Please email your selection to Kevin Best. When you go, bring a piece of paper that indicates your name and your order. Service will be excellent that way. It's all paid for. Please work out a schedule with Kevin so that everyone goes and has a great meal and a nice time on me, but read that as on the citizens we serve.

*Ralph R. Baker*  
*Spokane County Assessor*