TAX MATTERS

JUNE 2010, Issue #10-06, by Bernard Ridens, Executive Director Taxpayers Association of Vigo County, Inc.

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REVIEW OF PAST TAX MATTERS MAY 2010 (#10-05)

- THE HIT LIST WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?
 - It is time for the Taxpayers of Vigo County to have an opportunity to determine what services are most important to them. We are suggesting that a list of all ideas that might save money or reduce taxes be developed and encourage the local media to publish it in the form of a survey.
- ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES AND 2010 TA BOARD MEMBERS
- o 2010 DIGEST
 - Digest of the bills that were passed by the 2010 Indiana State Legislature: <u>http://www.taxtopics.org/2010%20DIGEST.pdf</u>.

APRIL 2010 (#10-04)

• TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING PACKET

MARCH 2010 (#10-03)

- TAX RATES 2009 PAY 2010
 - The Vigo County tax rate table is here!
- TERRE HAUTE NORTH VIGO H.S. WINS THE EAGLE
- TRAILS AND GREENWAYS SURVEY
- BIDDER ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS
 - The City Council passed an amendment that creates a "City of Terre Haute Responsible Bidder Ordinance." It can be found here: <u>http://www.taxtopics.org/Go2,2010.pdf</u>
- TAXPAYER ASSOCIATION MEMBER BENEFITS

The Taxpayers Association is a not-for-profit 501(c)(4) organization supported by membership dues. Any citizen or group of citizens in Vigo County may be a member. Current members are encouraged to promote membership in the organization by giving the attached application to a potential member. See the TA application and dues structure. This is NOT an invoice for your dues.

1. THE LIST - CUTTING GOVERNMENT SERVICES 201

During the past month the Taxpayers Association has been gathering suggestions of ways local government could reduce budgets and or function more efficiently thus avoiding any tax increases or new taxes such as local income taxes.

All of the following ideas have been proposed by citizens from all walks of life. <u>The</u> <u>identity of all persons submitting suggestions is and will remain anonymous</u>. All suggestions are listed even if some are not possible or have been implemented. The list is provided in no particular order of importance or entity involved. Some of the ideas have been abbreviated. The person making some suggestions did not clarify the entity of government to which the idea was aimed.

You are invited to add to the list or express concern about any of the suggestions. Your comments will also be kept confidential. We hope the media will publish this list and encourage more ideas from the public as a whole.

LIGHTS ON ATHLETIC FIELDS; PLAY VCSC FOOTBALL GAMES ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON

USE LESS PAPER ---CITY COUNTY VCSC

JACK RABBIT BUS STARTS (CITY AND COUNTY)

CLOSE A GOLF COURSE

RAISE FEES (ALL ENTITIES)

MOW LESS GRASS

STOP WATERING

ALLOW EARLY GOLF PLAY--- 7:00 A.M. JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

CLOSE OR LEASE BOTH GOLF COURSES

CLOSE A PARK (City & County) (REMEMBER LIBRARY BRANCHES)

CLOSE ANOTHER PARK

CLOSE ANOTHER PARK

MERGE CITY AND COUNTY PARKS TO ONE SYSTEM

STOP MOWING OHIO BOULEVARD

STOP MOWING OTHER PLACES (SCHOOLS, COUNTY, CITY, AIRPORT)

STOP FLOWER PLANTINGS

MOW LESS GRASS IN THE PARKS

REDUCE CITY BUS RUNS

ELIMINATE CITY TRANSIT SYSTEM (LET A PRIVATE COMPANY SUCH AS YELLOW CAB PROVIDE

THE SERVICE)

ENCOURAGE CAR POOLING

CO-ORDINATE CITY, COUNTY, SCHOOL, COLLEGE, LIBRARY, HOURS / DAYS

STOP USING A PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL

STOP USING ANOTHER POOL

ONLY FILL POT HOLES GREATER THAN (X) IN DIAMETER OR (Y) INCHES DEEP

NO NIGHT TIME PUBLIC MEETINGS (SAVE ON LIGHTING, HVAC)

CONSIDER FOUR DAY SCHOOL WEEKS (MON-THURSDAY, TUESDAY – FRIDAY)

LOWER WINTER BUILDING TEMPS (ALL UNITS)

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RAISE SUMMER BUILDING TEMPS (ALL UNITS)

BICYCLE SOME POLICE PATROLS

REDUCE COURT HOUSE AND ANNEX HOURS

DIFFERENT DAILY HOURS FOR COURT HOUSE, CITY HALL, AND ANNEX

REDUCE STREET SWEEPING

RAISE BUS FEES, SELL SPECIAL PASSES

STOP CLEANING EACH CLASSROOM ANNUALLY

CLEAN CLASSROOMS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

STOP MOWING CEMETERIES

REDUCE STREET LIGHTING (REDUCE HOURS OF CITY STREET LIGHTING)

CHARGE A FEE FOR CITY TRASH PICK UP

REDUCE THE JAIL POPULATION –WHAT ARE OTHER COUNTIES DOING?

EMPLOYEES KEEP JOBS BUT WORK LESS FOR LESS PAY AND BENEFITS

SHORTER AND OR FEWER BREAKS

STOP UNNECSSARY CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE (ALL UNITS)

SEND FEWER PEOPLE TO WORKSHOPS AND REQUIRE REPORTS BE PLACED ON INTERNET SITES.

CHARGE MORE AND HIGHER FEES (LIBRARY VIDEOS ETC.)

STOP OR REDUCE SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

RELOCATE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT TO WASHINGTON SCHOOL BUILDING

PRIVATIZE EMS SERVICE BUT HIRE FIREMAN ON A PART TIME BASIS

RE-EVALUTE THE COMPLETE PROCESS OF DESIGN, BIDDING AND CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS AND BRIDGES

CONSIDER A COUNTY WIDE FIRE DEPARTMENT

ALLOW CERTAIN JAIL INMATES TO DO MORE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

CHARGE INMATES FOR A PORTION OF THEIR DAILY CARE-- CREATE A LOAN SYSTEM FOR

THOSE THAT DON'T HAVE FUNDS AT PRESENT

REDUCE ALL CONTRACTED SERVICES - CITY, COUNTY, SCHOOLS. ETC.

SEEK MUTIPLE BIDS/PROPOSALS ON ALL PROJECTS, EVEN WHEN NOT REQUIRED BY LAW HIRE LESS FULL TIME EMPLOYEES

OFFER SPECIAL BONUS FOR COST SAVING IDEAS THAT ARE UNIQUE AND IMPLEMENTED

OFFER RETIREMENT BUY OUTS

PRIVATIZE CEMETERIES

USE LOCAL CONTRACTORS EVEN IF NOT THE LOWEST BID

DEVELOP PLANS TO DETERMINE WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO THE TAXPAYERS

DO NOT BORROW MONEY TO MEET BUDGET

CHARGE A SURTAX OR FEE FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES SUCH AS EXCESSIVE USE OF EMS

OR SECURITY SYSTEM ALARMS

SELL SURPLUS PROPERTIES

2. EXAMINATION OF EFFECT OF PROPERTY TAX CAPS ON A VARIETY OF PROPERTY TYPES

The tax cap issue is currently a concern for all governmental entities depending on property tax support. Each entity has found less support from the property tax dollar since the inception of the caps. We are presenting several situations and demonstrating graphically the change in the amount of property tax dollars distributed to each entity because of the cap.

The first situation is for residential property located in Harrison Township or annexed areas of Vigo County. Property owned by selected government officials was used to demonstrate the differences between the gross tax liability, the net tax liability (CAPPED), and the savings due to the 1% cap.



Tax Liability on Homestead Residential - Harrison and Annexed Areas

The second situation is for residential property **not** located in Harrison Township or annexed areas of Vigo County. Property owned by selected government officials was used to demonstrate the differences between the gross tax liability, the net tax liability (CAPPED), and the savings due to the 1% cap.



Tax Liability on Non-Homestead Residential, Residential Rental, and Agricultural Property -Non-Harrison and Non-Annexed Areas

(Note: the rates for areas not including the city are such that there is very little savings because of the tax caps. The savings is not \$0, but very close to it on the average.)

In the next two examples, one property of \$200,000 AV was considered in each of the 25 townships and corporations in Vigo County. These were sub-divided into those paying property tax toward the City of Terre Haute and those not paying this portion of the tax.

The third situation is for non-homestead residential, residential rental, and agricultural property with a \$200,000 AV located in Harrison Township or annexed areas of Vigo County. The sample AV was used as a typical AV in each of the annexed portions of the townships for the purpose of examining the differences between the gross tax liability, the net (CAPPED) tax liability, and the savings due to the 2% cap.



Tax Liability on \$200,000 Non-Homestead Residential, Residential Rental, and Agricultural AV -Harrison and Annexed Areas

The fourth situation is for non-homestead residential, residential rental, and agricultural property with a \$200,000 AV **not** located in Harrison Township or annexed areas of Vigo County. The sample AV was used as a typical AV in each of the annexed portions of the townships for the purpose of examining the differences between the gross tax liability, the net (CAPPED) tax liability, and the savings due to the 2% cap.





3. SURVEY – TERRE HAUTE PARKS DEPARTMENT

The Terre Haute Parks Department needs your opinion and input about parks and recreational activities in the city. To help them, please access and complete a short survey at <u>http://161.58.109.117/thparks/</u>.

4. PLANNING AHEAD – A TWO-PART TAX CAPS ARTICLE

Planning Ahead – Tax Caps May Be Here to Stay By Gary Malone, CPA, Partner

Part 1 in a series

It wasn't surprising that the 2010 Indiana General Assembly session gave the green light to place a public question on the November ballot asking voters to weigh in on making the new property tax caps part of the Indiana Constitution. It is too early to say what voters will do, but given the anti-property tax sentiment we often hear from taxpayers, local governmental units and school districts should plan for the possibility that property tax caps may be here to stay.



Circuit breaker property tax credits limit the total property tax bill of each taxpayer to a fixed percentage of the property's value, before

deductions. Once a property taxpayer reaches this limit, they pay no more in property taxes. In effect it creates a "hard cap" on total effective property tax rates. The resulting shortfalls in property tax collections are shared among all taxing units in proportion to their respective tax rate.

Of course the tax caps are still relatively new; most local governments and school districts are still adjusting to the caps – and some may not have experienced the full effect just yet.

Compounding the financial challenge for most cities and towns is that the new 35% homestead exemption is reducing property tax revenues from fixed rate funds, such as cumulative capital development funds, by 10 to 20%. And because current economic conditions have decreased income taxes receipts at both the state and county level, it has given governments less income for operating expenses, capital expenditures and property tax relief. Less funding available for property tax relief causes you to lose more revenue to property tax caps – becoming a self-perpetuating cycle.

Revenue for all taxing entities may also be adversely affected by trending if market value assessments have been reduced, property tax appeals, property tax collection delays or property tax delinquencies.

If your entity's income is being reduced by property tax caps, some of your options include:

- Manage revenues efficiently
- Find opportunities for cost efficiencies
- Consolidate services
- Manage your capital expenditures
- Grow your tax base

In our next issue, we'll cover the budgeting issues that arise when planning for tax caps.

Planning Ahead – What If Tax Caps Are Here to Stay By Gary Malone, CPA, Partner

Part 2 in a series

The circuit breaker property tax credits that voters will be asked to approve as part of the Indiana Constitution in November limit each taxpayer's total property tax bill to a fixed percentage of the property's value, before deductions. Once a property taxpayer reaches this limit, they pay no more in property taxes, creating a "hard cap" on total effective property tax rates. The resulting shortfalls in property tax collections are shared among all taxing units in proportion to their respective tax rate.

Since local governmental units can't borrow or increase property tax rates to replace the shortfall in revenues, it is essential for local governmental units and school districts to predict the amount of credits to be allocated to each of your funds. For a variety of reasons, projections from the State have been unpredictable at best. Even if revenue loss projections were accurate statewide, your area might deviate significantly from state averages.

Your budget must recognize that not all of the property taxes levied will be collected. You need a method to predict these shortfalls while you're in the budget preparation process, because actual amounts from the county auditor will not be available until tax bills are prepared.

Beyond the annual budgeting process, you will need to develop a forecast of revenues and expenditures for the next three to five years to identify potential revenue shortfalls. Consider managing your budget to achieve a targeted fund balance by year end to give you a cushion to deal with any volatility in revenue. The targeted fund balance should reflect adequate working capital, debt service requirements and capital plans. It should also consider the uncertainly of future property tax collections and income tax receipts.

You will need to prioritize your needs. For example, if you need to borrow money for capital projects, you'll need to establish whether a new debt levy will be <u>inside</u> these limits (which may cause you to hit property tax caps) or if it is better to seek voter approval of the new levy through a referendum.

Projects under \$2 million may be funded by property tax supported bonds. That debt service, however, will fall within the circuit breaker tax cap limits. Bond repayment approved by a voter referendum is outside of the tax caps.

As revenue from state sales tax lagged at the end of 2009, we saw a number of school districts put public questions on the May primary ballot, asking voters to approve local property taxes for additional operating revenue.

We will probably see an increase in referendums as the full impact of property tax credits is felt – not just from schools, but from libraries and other governmental units.

In our next article in this series, we'll explore seemingly unintended consequences of the property tax caps.

If you would like help in projecting the effect of property tax caps in your area, finding cost efficiencies, consolidations, managing capital expenditures or growing your tax base, please contact us at footnotes@umbaugh.com.

5. DIPLOMAS 2010

The unofficial numbers are now known. The total number of students earning diplomas on time (end of the 2009/ 2010 school year) in Vigo County (VCSC) is 1023. This is up from 994 earning a diploma as of the 2008/2009 school year. In 2005 the class of 2010 numbered 1340. In 2006 the class of 2010 numbered 1384. These numbers yield a comparable rate of seventy-six percent. This fall the <u>official graduation rates</u> will be reported by the Indiana Department of Instruction and will look better than the numbers we show here. These improved rates are the result of a public law (IC 20-26-13-10) whereby school corporations can delete students from the freshman count. Students may not be counted for the reasons listed below. Taxpayers should question the net result until every student not counted by a school corporation is accounted for by some other entity. Each one not accounted for should be considered a dropout.

A) Transfer to another public or nonpublic school.

B) Removal by the student's parents under IC 20-33-2-28 to provide instruction equivalent to that given in the public schools.

C) Withdrawal because of a long term medical condition or death.

D) Detention by a law enforcement agency or the department of correction.

E) Placement by a court order or the department of child services.

F) Enrollment in a virtual school.

G) Leaving school, if the student attended school in Indiana for less than one (1) school year and the location of the student cannot be determined.

H) Leaving school, if the location of the student cannot be determined and the student has been reported to the Indiana clearinghouse for information on missing children.

I) Withdrawing from school before graduation, if the student is a high ability student (as defined in IC 20-36-1-3) who is a full-time student at an accredited institution of higher education during the semester in which the cohort graduates.

6. THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Declaration of Independence is a document written by our Founding Fathers declaring America's independence. A committee of five men, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston were appointed to write the document. The first draft of the Declaration was written by Jefferson, in seclusion. John Adams was the first person to revise the document, followed by Benjamin Franklin, and finally by the full Congressional Committee. It was altered a total of 47 times before independence was declared. Independence was declared on July 2, 1776, and 39 more revisions to the document followed. John Hancock was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence, on July 4, 1776. Thomas Jefferson, was the greatest contributor

of the words contained in the document, and described the <u>Declaration of Independence</u> as "An expression of the American mind." ~*~ It was a declaration of independence for the colonies of the 13 States, in America, from Great Britain and was adopted on July 4, 1776 by the Second Continental Congress, when John Hancock, who was the President of the Congress, accepted and signed it. All the men who signed the document, knew that they had placed themselves in grave danger, but were willing to risk their live for what they believed.

When the Declaration of Independence was declared, John Adams wrote this historic letter to his wife:

"I am apt to believe that this day will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore."

~*~

The Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands. One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

7. COMPUTER NEEDED

~*~

The Taxpayers Association office is in need of a computer.

We have recently upgraded our internet service from dial-up to Time Warner Road Runner. Our current computers are too old to efficiently utilize this modern technology. Since we can't afford to purchase a new computer, we are looking for a donation.

We could also use a lap-top computer with a good power pack.

Meanwhile, we have a working XEROX 5014 copy machine to donate to a not for profit organization. It will require two men to carry it out.

8. ANNUAL REPORT

Data collection is nearing an end for the Taxpayers Association 2010 Annual Report. The report will be in your hands as soon as we complete the presentation phase of the report. Our goal is "as soon as possible".

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9. TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING

The next Taxpayers Association Board Meeting will occur Tuesday, July 20, at the MCL Restaurant at the Meadows Shopping Center. We will begin lunch around 11:30 am with the business portion of the meeting starting at 12:00 noon. We should conclude the meeting by around 1:00 pm.

10. PUBLIC MEETINGS

The purpose of this calendar is to encourage taxpayers to attend public meetings. Taxpaying persons working at your business or living in your neighborhood should be encouraged to attend a meeting of their choice at least once per year. The date and time for the meetings listed below are always subject to change. Organizations that are underlined have a web page that can be accessed by clicking on their respective hyperlinks. The contact person is also listed. You should call the appropriate office and confirm the date and time if you plan to attend.

D	oate	Time	Public Meeting	Location	Conta	act Info
Thur.	Jul. 1	7:00 pm	City Council – Sunshine Meeting	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle	232-3375
Mon.	Jul. 5	4:30 pm	Animal Control Board	City Hall – 1 st Floor		
Mon.	Jul. 5	6:30 pm	Riley Town Board	Riley Town Hall	Wanda	894-2410
Tue.	Jul. 6	9:00 <mark>am</mark>	County Commissioners	County Annex	Judy	462-3367
Tue.	Jul. 6	10:00 <mark>am</mark>	City Board of Sanitary Commissioners	City Hall – 3 rd Floor	Sally	235-5458
Tue.	Jul. 6	4:30 pm	Honey Creek Conservancy District	3241 S. 3 rd Place	Craig	232-4311
Wed.	Jul. 7	9:00 <mark>am</mark>	City Board of Zoning Appeals	City Hall – 1 st Floor Conf. Room	Judy	462-3367
Wed.	Jul. 7	7:00 pm	County Area Planning Commission	County Annex	Vickie	462-3354
Thur.	Jul. 8	7:00 pm	City Council – Regular Meeting	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle	232-3375
Mon.	Jul. 12	2:00 pm	Board of Public Works and Safety	City Hall – Board of Public Works Room	Robin	232-4767
Mon.	Jul. 12	5:30 pm	Human Relations Commission	Booker T. Washington Center	Jeff	232-0110
Mon.	Jul. 12	6:00 pm	West Terre Haute Town Board	500 W. Nat'l, WTH	Melody	533-2034
Mon.	Jul. 12	7:00 pm	Vigo County School Board	VCSC Board Room	Judy	462-4216
Tue.	Jul. 13	9:00 <mark>am</mark>	County Commissioners	County Annex	Judy	462-3367
Tue.	Jul. 13	7:00 pm	Seelyville Town Board	Seelyville Water Office	Tamara	877-2665
Wed.	Jul. 14	10:00 <mark>am</mark>	County Board of Zoning Appeals	County Annex	Judy	462-3367
Wed.	Jul. 14	2:00 pm	E-911 Advisory Board	County Jail – Sheriff's Training Room	Greg	462-3226 ext. 320
Wed.	Jul. 14	4:30 pm	<u>City Park Board – General Meeting</u>	Deming Park	Eddie	232-2727
Wed.	Jul. 14	7:00 pm	Airport Authority	Airport	Kara	877-2524
Thur.	Jul. 15	2:00 pm	Tree Advisory Board	City Hall Mayor's Conf. Room	Jennifer	232-4028
Mon.	Jul. 19	7:00 pm	Vigo County Public Library	Vigo County Public Library	Nancy	232-1113
Tue.	Jul. 20	9:00 <mark>am</mark>	County Commissioners	County Annex	Judy	462-3367
Tue.	Jul. 20	10:00 <mark>am</mark>	City Board of Sanitary Commissioners	City Hall – 3 rd Floor	Sally	235-5458
Tue.	Jul. 20	12:00 noon	<u>Taxpayers Association Board</u> <u>Meeting</u>	MCL	Bernard	235-1361
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Date	Time	Public Meeting	Location Contact Info		act Info
Wed. Jul. 21	9:30 <mark>am</mark>	Clay-Owen-Vigo Solid Waste District	109 E. Nat'l, Brazil IN	Janet	800-387-3380
Wed. Jul. 21	4:00 pm	City Redevelopment Commission	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Phenny	232-0018
Wed. Jul. 21	5:00 pm	Vigo County Board of Health	County Annex	Louise	462-3428
Mon. Jul. 26	2:00 pm	Board of Public Works and Safety	City Hall – Board of Public Works Room	Robin	232-4767
Mon. Jul. 26	4:00 pm	County Park Board	County Annex	Julia	462-3391
Mon. Jul. 26	5:30 pm	Terre Haute Housing Authority	2001 N. 19 th Street	Jeff	232-1381
Mon. Jul. 26	7:00 pm	Vigo County School Board	VCSC Board Room	Judy	462-4216
Tue. Jul. 27	9:00 <mark>am</mark>	County Commissioners	County Annex	Judy	462-3367
Tue. Jul. 27	5:00 pm	County Council	County Annex	Auditor	462-3361
Wed. Jul. 28	4:30 pm	<u> City Park Board – Business Meeting</u>	Deming Park	Eddie	232-2727
Wed. Jul. 28	5:30 pm	Information Technology Advisory <u>Board</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Brad	244-2316
Wed. Jul. 28	7:00 pm	Airport Authority	Airport	Kara	877-2524

END

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