

ONLINE MAPS

After much anticipation, the Washington County Assessor's Office has posted GIS maps online for the public to use. These can be accessed free of charge on the county's website at www.co.washington.ar.us. Once at the website, click the *Information* link, then select *Washington County Maps*; this will bring up an image of the county. Using the tools and layers located on each side of the page one can manipulate the map as needed. There are many useful tools in this website including: zooming in and out, panning, and measuring. There are also many different layers that may be displayed on the map.

While the visible layers are what you can see, the active layer is the layer that you conduct searches through. You can search by parcel number, section–township–range, or simply panning around the map. When searching, it is important that the layer you are using is both active and visible. When adding a visible or active layer, you must refresh the page in order for the layer to appear.

Once you zoom in on the map, the layers will allow you to view aerial photography, topographical contour lines, city limit and parcel boundaries, parcel numbers, soil maps, street lines, and even timber cover. Technological advances and hard work throughout Washington County has made researching, locating, and identifying properties easier and more efficient.
BY: BRIAN FRAZIER

ANTIQUE TAGS

Antique tags do not have to be renewed, but similarly with other tags, the vehicle still must be assessed every year. Antique vehicles must also remain insured. To obtain antique tags, the vehicles must be at least 25 years old. Vehicles are required to be restored to their original specifications in order to benefit from antique tags.

Antique trucks are not allowed to tow or haul items and are not to be utilized for work purposes. If you have recently sold an antique vehicle, we require the bill of sale in order to remove it from your assessment. Remember to assess every year by May 31st to avoid late penalties.
BY: SHEILA CARR

NEW FACE

We would like to introduce one of our newest employees, Tiffany Bruner. She started in the Assessor's Office in February 2005 as a temporary employee. She was hired on full time in May 2005. She works at the front counter in Personal Property where her duties include assessing



personal property for our customers. She also takes phone calls for customers who assess over the phone. Tiffany was born in Fayetteville and grew up in Lincoln. She has a four-year-old son named Nathaniel. Most of her free time is dedicated to him. Her hobbies include taking her son to Play Day to teach him how to ride horses. When she is at home she likes to read to her son and take him riding on their four wheelers. If you are ever in Lincoln you might see her at the American Drive In. She also works there part time as a cashier and a cook. We enjoy having her as part of our team.
BY: ANDREA CALDERON

FAMILIAR FACE

Lindsay West is the Administrative Assistant to the Assessor. She has worked in both the Personal Property Department and the Real Estate Department during her almost 9 years working in the Assessor's office. This experience and her meticulous methods make her the perfect Administrative Assistant.

Lindsay ensures that all the bills get authorized and sent to the Comptroller for payment. She also manages the Property Search subscriptions and payments. She is responsible for the Assessor's correspondence and telephone, and does an excellent job making sure that all the administrative functions of the office run smoothly.

In her free time, Lindsay is an avid photographer and scrap-booker. She enjoys exploring the Ozarks and capturing them on film.

BY: LEE ANN KIZZAR

"Thanks for all the assistance in putting this newsletter together. Particularly: William Stephenson's editing, Lisa VanVliet's editing assistance, Dan Cypert's photography, and Cindy Jester for the layout."



Washington
County
Assessor's
Office

"Our mission is to serve Washington County taxpayers by fairly assessing property values, maintaining equity, providing information, and assisting our customers in every capacity within the law."

ASSESSMENT NEWS

QUARTERLY EDITION

December 1, 2005



FROM THE ASSESSOR

Lee Ann Kizzar

As we come to the end of another year, I look back at all that we've accomplished and forward to the great things to come. I'm very grateful for the opportunities we've been given.

This year we were able to bring our digital map service online and make it available on our County website. We were also internationally honored for the work done on that service in cooperation with the City of Fayetteville.

In October at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Assessors Association I was elected Secretary/Treasurer for the coming year. It's a great honor, and an even greater responsibility, to be selected to serve by my fellow assessors statewide. Secretary/Treasurer is the only elected office in the Association. Once elected to that post, one ascends through the other offices to eventually become the President.

So, if you call or come by the office, and I'm not immediately available, know that I am working for the citizens of Washington County and the State of Arkansas somewhere other than my desk.

Best wishes for the coming year!

AMENDMENT 79

Amendment 79 was passed by majority vote of the people of Arkansas during the state wide General Election on November 7, 2000. Amendment 79 is intended to create property tax relief for homeowners in Arkansas and provide for up to \$300 tax credit on the property that is their primary place of residence. It also limits any increase in taxable assessed value due to a reappraisal to 5% per year on the primary place of residence and 10% on all other properties. For homeowners 65 and older or who are 100% disabled as defined by the Social Security Administration, Amendment 79 prevents the assessment on their primary place of residence from ever increasing due to a reappraisal. These provisions apply even if the homeowner is staying in a nursing home, or retains a life estate in the property. These provisions do not apply on new construction, changes in use of property, or millage increases.

These limits in the taxable assessed values only apply to the current owners. Once a property sells the taxable values will be assessed at the full market value on January 1 the year after to property sells.

To claim the Homestead credit, it is the homeowner's responsibility to notify the assessor in the county where his or her primary residence is located. Those who are 65 or older or disabled will need to provide proof of their age (drivers license, birth certificate, or state ID) or proof of their disability to claim special benefits.

In no event shall the property tax credit be allowed after October 10 for the year after the assessment (the year the taxes are due).

Once a parcel of real property is determined to be eligible for the property tax credit, the parcel shall remain eligible for the credit that year regardless of a change in use of the parcel during the same year.

A property owner may claim only one property as their primary residence in order to receive the Homestead Tax Credit. If the county assessor determines that a property owner has claimed more than one homestead credit in a year or failed to report a change in use of the property, in addition to repayment of the homestead tax credit a penalty of 100% will be incurred.

BY: BARBARA RYAN

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS NEWS

Recently, Lee Ann Kizzar, the Washington County Assessor, Dan Cypert, Chief Deputy, and William Stephenson, Assistant Assessor in Real Estate, attended the "2005 GIS Symposium" in Hot Springs. The three-day conference offered classes and discussions on the various applications of GIS technology. These ranged from presentations as practical as soil coding, to digitally mapping archeological ruins. Our representatives were particularly interested in assessment applications and attended several presentations. Among these was a discussion on geo-coding, which establishes digital points in a mapping system to aid in locating a particular parcel. Although we rely on legal descriptions to locate parcels, many of our customers use a location address, which is sometimes the only information available; proper geo-coding makes it easier to help them. Another very useful discussion was directed toward using the tool bars accompanying the mapping software to help produce hard copy information in a useful form. This was very applicable to our office; since our mapping system has progressed we are producing more and more maps for use by our customers.



From left to right: William Stephenson, Lee Ann Kizzar, and Dan Cypert

Lee Ann delivered a presentation on the benefits of oblique imagery for local governments. Oblique imagery is a digital photo taken at various angles of an object giving the image a three dimensional effect. This is a useful tool in assessing new improvements and capturing changes to existing improvements. It is also useful technology for law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and emergency services to determine access to dwellings and other buildings.

All the topics discussed were valuable, not only for the practical applications, but also to see the progress being made by various groups using this technology. Geographic Information Systems databases are often shared, so advance-

ment by one entity can help many others through using their data. Attending GIS conferences enhances our ability to provide excellent mapping services to our customers.

BY: WILLIAM STEPHENSON

NEW SUBDIVISIONS AND ANNEXATIONS

More than 2000 new parcels were created from filed subdivision plats in 2005. This is a record for Washington County, and it brings our total parcel count to well over 85,000. The growth in parcels can be attributed to the healthy economy this area continues to experience. Setting up the new parcels requires the effort of several staff members in the Assessor's Office; however, the process is more streamlined than in the past. Key personnel coordinate their efforts by creating the basic parcel data, assigning the parcel identifiers, and digitally mapping the new subdivision in the Geographic Information System's database. The final steps include valuing the new lots and entering deed information to update ownership changes. This cooperation among different departments has made the process very efficient. With our healthy real estate market, many new lots change from developer to builder, to new owner very quickly. Title companies need accurate information for their closings and rely on our assessment records.

More than 500 parcels were annexed this year. Record changes for annexations are not as complex as setting up new subdivisions, but it also requires cooperation and accuracy. More often than not the physical boundary of the parcel does not change. However, some very important aspects pertaining to the parcel do change including the parcel identifier and the tax district. Each city, including rural and urban (platted rural subdivisions) parcels have different numerical prefixes to aid record keeping. So, when a rural parcel becomes a city parcel a new parcel number must be assigned. Sometimes the market values of property can change due to a change in use which may have necessitated the annexation. School district codes change and this affects the millage rate. It is the goal of the Assessor's office to make all of these necessary changes happen as smoothly and accurately as possible.

BY: WILLIAM STEPHENSON