

# Value Task Force Assessor's Department Final Report

## General Summary

The primary mission of the Assessor's Department is to deliver accurate and equitable values with a reputation of integrity while assessing the 11,721 parcels within the city. All functions of the assessment office are performed in-house, including city-wide revaluations, providing a consistent level of high-bar accountability. Outside the statutory duties, the department provides support and assistance to other city and county departments that align with their annual processes.

The department has a 0.91% impact on the city's total operating budget. Department expenses for 2011 were \$291,600.

Four employees staff the department – all full-time. This headcount has remained at four (4) for the past 10 years. The Assessor's Office is very well cross-trained. Department Head Shannon Krause is a very good manager. She has 25 years of experience, and it shows through her competency and leadership.

Overall, the VTF believes the department is running near top efficiency.

## Findings

### Exempt Properties

1. There are two categories of exempt property (per State Statute):
  - A. Property specifically exempted by statute through ownership, use of the property, or a combination of ownership and use.
  - B. Property that is exempt from property tax, but taxable by special methods.
2. Some taxable property is assessed by someone other than the local assessor. An example is manufacturing property which is assessed by the state. While the municipal assessor is not responsible for valuing such property it is still taxable and should not be confused with property which is exempt.
3. Unless mandated by state law, the City Assessor makes the determination of exemption status.
4. A property must be benevolent associated to receive exempt status.
5. There are an estimated 11,794 parcels within the city of West Bend (per information from Shannon) . Of those, 348 are exempt. See the following table for a breakdown of the 348 exempt properties:

Exempt Type	Vacant	Improved	Total
E1-FEDERAL	0	1	1
E2-STATE	14	1	15
E3-COUNTY	5	8	13
E4-OTHER	30	56	86

E5-CITY	190	29	219
E6-SCHOOL	2	12	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>348</b>

6. Some municipalities place values on exempt properties and charge fees for items like extensions, updates, and public safety. Pleasant Prairie and Pewaukee are two that were cited by Shannon during the RFI review.
7. The number of exempt properties in the city has increased from 287 in 2002, to 348 in 2012.
8. The number of appeals cases before the Board of Review has risen from two (2) in 2002 to 44 (est) in 2012.

### **Recommendations**

1. Market West Bend's superior assessor services to other communities. Not all surrounding communities have in-house assessors, as most are out-sourced.
2. Continue the current practice of identifying potential liabilities to minimize the risk to city on tax assessment appeals.
3. Investigate how other municipalities and the city of West Bend define user fees for services to exempt properties.
  - A What are tax exempt properties' burdens on non-exempt properties (i.e. impact of fees/services)?
  - B Can a potential fee structure be defined to re-coup some services on exempt properties?
  - C How does State statute define exempt property?
  - D What other municipalities have a fee structure in place for exempt properties, and how is it structured? (Follow up with Pleasant Prairie and Pewaukee).
  - E With the number of exempt properties on the rise, estimate city services usage by exempt properties.
    - i Estimate the value of services provided to exempt properties like police and fire.
    - ii Establish a value for the 348 tax exempt properties in the city.