

STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS
302 West Washington Street
Room E418
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204-2769

AUDIT REPORT
OF
COUNTY ASSESSOR
TIPPECANOE COUNTY, INDIANA
January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008



FILED
05/14/2010

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COUNTY OFFICIALS

<u>Office</u>	<u>Official</u>	<u>Term</u>
Assessor	Samantha Steele	01-01-07 to 12-31-10
President of the County Council	Thomas P. Murtaugh Kevin Underwood Andrew S. Gutwein	01-01-08 to 12-31-08 01-01-09 to 12-31-09 01-01-10 to 12-31-10
President of the Board of County Commissioners	Ruth E. Shedd John L. Knochel	01-01-08 to 12-31-08 01-01-09 to 12-31-10



STATE OF INDIANA
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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TO: THE OFFICIALS OF TIPPECANOE COUNTY

We have audited the records of the County Assessor for the period from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008, and certify that the records and accountability for cash and other assets are satisfactory to the best of our knowledge and belief, except as stated in the Audit Results and Comments. The financial transactions of this office are reflected in the Annual Report of Tippecanoe County for the year 2008.

STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS

February 25, 2010

COUNTY ASSESSOR
TIPPECANOE COUNTY
AUDIT RESULTS AND COMMENTS

NOTIFICATION OF FINAL ASSESSMENT DETERMINATION

The Notification of Final Assessment Determination (Form 115) was sometimes used in place of the Petition For Correction of an Error (Form 133).

The Form 115, prescribed by the Department of Local Government Finance, is used to notify the taxpayer of the County Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeal's (PTABOA) determination on an assessment. Form 133 is used to petition for the correction of errors that are outlined in IC 6-1.1-15-12.

Of the seven Form 115s tested, there was no documentation in the PTABOA's minutes that determinations were made by the Board.

Political subdivisions are required to comply with all grant agreements, rules, regulations, bulletins, directives, letters, letter rulings, and filing requirements concerning reports and other procedural matters of federal and state agencies, including opinions of the Attorney General of the State of Indiana, and court decisions. Governmental units should file accurate reports required by federal and state agencies. Noncompliance may require corrective action. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 1)

JOINT REPORT BY TAXPAYER/ASSESSOR TO THE COUNTY BOARD
OF APPEALS OF A PRELIMINARY INFORMAL MEETING

Joint Report by Taxpayer/Assessor to the County Board of Appeals of a Preliminary Informal Meeting (Form 134) was sometimes used in place of the Petition For Correction of an Error (Form 133).

Form 134, Prescribed by the Department of Local Government Finance, is required to be completed to document the informal preliminary meeting between the taxpayer and the assessor in the beginning of the appeal process. This form is to be forwarded to the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals (PTABOA) no later than ten days after the informal preliminary meeting between the taxpayer and the assessor. This serves as notification to PTABOA of the proposed resolution between the taxpayer and assessor as to assessment issues or that no resolution has been agreed upon. The PTABOA then has the opportunity to change the assessment. Form 133 is used to petition for the correction of errors that are outlined in IC 6-1.1-15-12.

For the eight Form 134s tested, there was no documentation, including notation in PTABOA minutes, that the PTABOA received the Form 134 either within the ten days or ever. There was also no documentation as to whether they had considered a change to or had in fact changed the assessment.

IC 6-1.1-15-1, effective July 1, 2008, states in part:

"(i) Not later than ten (10) days after the informal preliminary meeting, the official referred to in subsection (a) shall forward to the county auditor and the county board the results of the conference on a form prescribed by the department of local government finance that must be completed and signed by the taxpayer and the official. The form must indicate the following:

- (1) If the taxpayer and the official agree on the resolution of all assessment or deduction issues in the review, a statement of: (A) those issues; and (B) the assessed value of the tangible property or the amount of the deduction that results from the resolution of those issues in the manner agreed to by the taxpayer and the official.

COUNTY ASSESSOR
TIPPECANOE COUNTY
AUDIT RESULTS AND COMMENTS
(Continued)

- (2) If the taxpayer and the official do not agree on the resolution of all assessment or deduction issues in the review:
- (A) a statement of those issues; and
 - (B) the identification of:
 - (i) the issues on which the taxpayer and the official agree; and
 - (ii) the issues on which the taxpayer and the official disagree.
- (j) If the county board receives a form referred to in subsection (i)(1) before the hearing scheduled under subsection (k):
- (1) the county board shall cancel the hearing;
 - (2) the county official referred to in subsection (a) shall give notice to the taxpayer, the county board, the county assessor, and the county auditor of the assessment or deduction in the amount referred to in subsection (i)(1)(B); and
 - (3) if the matter in issue is the assessment of tangible property, the county board may reserve the right to change the assessment under IC 6-1.1-13."

Political subdivisions are required to comply with all grant agreements, rules, regulations, bulletins, directives, letters, letter rulings, and filing requirements concerning reports and other procedural matters of federal and state agencies, including opinions of the Attorney General of the State of Indiana, and court decisions. Governmental units should file accurate reports required by federal and state agencies. Noncompliance may require corrective action. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 1)

TRAVEL CLAIMS

The following travel claim issues were noted:

Numerous mileage claims for the Assessor's office were not well documented. When online mapping software was used it sometimes did not match the mileage claimed or was incomplete.

The County travel policy allows for the use of on-line mapping tools, such as MapQuest, to be used to verify distances for the purpose of mileage reimbursement. The Assessor stated that the use of the online mapping tools is the policy in her office due to the nature of the travel for field reviews.

Supporting documentation such as receipts, canceled checks, tickets, invoices, bills, contracts, and other public records must be available for audit to provide supporting information for the validity and accountability of monies disbursed. Payments without supporting documentation may be the personal obligation of the responsible official or employee. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 3)

COUNTY ASSESSOR
TIPPECANOE COUNTY
AUDIT RESULTS AND COMMENTS
(Continued)

Officials and employees are required to use State Board of Accounts prescribed or approved forms in the manner prescribed. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 1)

ADVANCE PAYMENTS

Payroll records document a hire date of July 21, 2008, for William R. Jennings. The timesheet submitted for the period July 16 to July 31, 2008, claimed two and one-half hours of time worked for July 17, 2008, in advance of Mr. Jennings' hire date.

Compensation and any other payments for goods and services should not be paid in advance of receipt of the goods or services unless specifically authorized by statute. Payments made for goods or services which are not received may be the personal obligation of the responsible official or employee. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 1)

TIME RECORDS

Employee time records for William R. Jennings for the period August 1 to August 15, 2008, were not maintained and presented for audit. There is no other supporting documentation that Mr. Jennings worked the 42.5 hours recorded on the payroll claim.

Officials and employees are required to use State Board of Accounts prescribed or approved forms in the manner prescribed. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 1)

IC 5-15-6-3(f) concerning destruction of public records, states in part: "Original records may be disposed of only with the approval of the commission according to guidelines established by the commission . . ."

Supporting documentation such as receipts, canceled checks, tickets, invoices, bills, contracts, and other public records must be available for audit to provide supporting information for the validity and accountability of monies disbursed. Payments without supporting documentation may be the personal obligation of the responsible official or employee. (Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Counties of Indiana, Chapter 3)

COUNTY ASSESSOR
TIPPECANOE COUNTY
EXIT CONFERENCE

The contents of this report were discussed on February 25, 2010, with Samantha Steele, Assessor; John L. Knochel, President of the Board of County Commissioners; and Andrew S. Gutwein, President of the County Council.

The official response has been made a part of this report and may be found on page 8.



TIPPECANOE COUNTY

TIPPECANOE COUNTY ASSESSOR
SAMANTHA STEELE-COLES
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To: Indiana State Board of Accounts
From: Samantha Steele-Coles, County Assessor
Date: February 25, 2010
Subject: Tippecanoe County Assessor Response to Audit Result and Comments

NOTIFICATION OF FINAL ASSESSMENT DETERMINATION

Tippecanoe County Assessor and Tippecanoe County Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals (PTABOA) are now filling all Petition for Correction of Error (Form 133) for all corrections of error. All Final Assessment Determination (Form 115) are used for the PTABOA determination of values and all Joint Report by Taxpayer/Assessor (Form 134) are submitted to the Appeals Office for the PTABOA to review. Due to scheduling and budget restraints the PTABOA generally only meets once a month. The timing of these meetings sometimes proves to be in conflict with the ten days required for the Form 134. To augment this conflict the Form 134 is made available to the PTABOA and the PTABOA rules on them at their monthly meeting.

All PTABOA meeting minutes are now well documented, sent to all Board members prior to the next meeting and then voted on for approval at the next meeting.

The PTABOA and the County Assessor have an open door relationship and value sharing important information as it becomes available.

TRAVEL CLAIMS

On-line mapping tools are used as a general guideline as to where particular properties are located in the County, at times the maps are not accurate and in those scenarios the actual mileage used are claimed. To ensure that there is no confusion for mileage reimbursement all employees now either use actual mileage or claim just the mileage provided with the on-line mapping tools. However, for documentation purposes all on-line mapping tools are now kept as a reference to account for property visited, even if actual millage is used.

ADVANCE PAYMENTS

It is not the County Assessor's practice to advance payments for services rendered. Employees are to fill out proper paperwork with Human Resources prior to performing any official duties.

TIME RECORDS

All employees are to submit an accurate timecard prior to any pay reimbursement. All employees now have access to computers where we can document time worked. The County is also investing in payroll software to help improve time records.

It is the County Assessor's goal to provide excellent services to the people of Tippecanoe County. The County Assessor recognizes that providing excellent services includes following all Indiana Assessment Codes, procedures approved by the Department of Local Government Financing and Indiana State Board of Accounts, as well as maintaining transparent practices. The County Assessor is always looking for ways to improve practices and procedures and welcomes any such suggestions.

Sincerely,

Samantha Steele-Coles
Tippecanoe County Assessor