

Layman's Guide to Revaluation

STEP 1 - PROJECT STARTUP

Once a contract is signed, the Company has to move very quickly. The logistics of setting up for a revaluation project is like a major military maneuver. The management team has to hit the ground running. Company managers, appraisers, and technicians must be relocated from their last assignments. Office equipment and furnishings have to be put in place. Phones and computer systems have to be installed. People have to be hired and trained to perform a variety of the labor-intensive tasks. Secretaries, clerks, receptionists, and data collectors are typically hired locally. A public information program has to be initiated to keep public officials and taxpayers informed and to solicit their cooperation.

STEP 2 - DATA COLLECTION

The first major activity that occurs in a project is data collection. Data collection is the gathering of all the information that will be used later to value properties. Data collectors hired and trained for this purpose, will make a complete exterior inspection of every property in the County.

A number of public meetings will be held before data collection begins. Some, but not all, property owners will have attended one of the meetings. So, for many taxpayers, the data collector will be the first Company representative that they see.

The data collector will knock on the door, display an identification badge, and briefly explain the purpose of the inspection. He or she will ask questions at the door concerning your property. The questions will only take a few minutes. The data collector will record pertinent information on a property record card. Only information that might affect the property value will be recorded (the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, type of heating system and air conditioning, type of basement and garage, for example).

If no one is home or if the resident refuses to answer questions about the house, the data collector will estimate the interior features based on existing County records and similar surrounding properties. The data collector will still take outside measurements and record exterior information.

Crew chiefs and Company managers will be performing follow-up checks on the data collected to ensure the highest degree of accuracy.

Commercial and industrial data will also be collected. However, the characteristics that affect value in complex properties are much different from those that affect homes. The Company's highly skilled team of commercial and industrial data collectors will record the physical characteristics of the complex properties. They will also collect replacement cost and economic information that influences the value of these properties. While the information used is different from residential properties, the commercial properties will also be appraised at full market value.

In addition to collecting property information, the Company will also verify and take a photograph of each property that has a building located on it. The photograph information will be stored in the County system.

STEP 3 - VALUATION

The actual appraisal of all taxable parcels is a massive effort involving a team of skilled technicians and appraisers. Using sophisticated computer programs, the staff will analyze all factors that affect property values. They will establish preliminary market values based on this data, will calculate replacement costs, and estimate current market values based on recent sales. The staff appraisers will make field reviews of the initial computer-generated values to reconcile replacement cost and market estimates. Adjustments will be made to the components of the valuation systems until the appraisers are satisfied. When they are satisfied, the final computer-generated values will be produced.

STEP 4 - CERTIFIED APPRAISAL REVIEW

The final step in the valuation process requires that staff appraisers who are designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as Certified Pennsylvania Evaluators (CPEs) review each value. The CPEs will conduct a review to establish the final appraised values to ensure they are consistent with recent property sales. The reviewers will have the computer-generated appraisals and support documentation with them in the field. They will exercise their skilled appraisal judgment by either accepting or changing the value estimates as necessary to establish consistency with the market. All of the changes made will then be fed back into the computer.

STEP 5 - PROPERTY OWNER NOTIFICATION

After all values have been established, it will be time to produce the long-awaited results. A notice containing the new property value will be sent to each property owner at the conclusion of the project. The notice will provide instructions for contacting Company officials to discuss the new value.

STEP 6 - INFORMAL REVIEWS

After the notices are mailed, the Company will provide a call-in service for property owners to schedule appointments to discuss the values with the Company and County staff. A property owner who believes the value is not accurate may schedule an appointment for an informal review. All information used in the valuation process will be available for the property owner at the informal review. The informal review provides an opportunity for the taxpayer to meet one-on-one with the Company and County staff. It should not be thought of as an adversarial meeting. It is simply an exchange of information

Informal reviews will be conducted by the Company and County Assessment personnel at the project field office. Property owners who are not satisfied with the results of the informal review may file an appeal with the Clinton County Board of Appeals.

STEP 7 - FINAL RESULTS

The reassessment of taxable properties of all types (residential, commercial, industrial, farm, and vacant land) is an enormous undertaking involving complex management and technical expertise. A highly professional team has been assembled to complete this effort which will take more than two (2) years. The end result will mean more fair and equitable assessments. Similar properties will have similar assessments and property owners will have more information available to them to assure fairness in the future.

The end of the project is really just the beginning of a whole new system of assessing property in Clinton County. The data collection effort never ends. As changes occur, the combined efforts of man and machine will be able to keep the data base current. The analytical and appraisal software installed during the project will enable the local assessors to reassess property as necessary to keep up with market changes. An unprecedented amount of information, including photo images, will be available to the taxpayers.