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REVE NEWS

FINANCE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • MARCH 2007 • VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3

Divisional Corner

Fadil Brija, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Property Division



I see myself as data-driven, which is appropriate for a division such as Property. Our purpose is to gather, analyze, interpret, and calculate data as we value the approximately one million residential and commercial properties in New York City every year. If our assessment rolls reflect incorrect data, the property owners of the City receive inaccurate market values and their property taxes are miscalculated. As Acting Assistant Commissioner for the Property Division since

October 2006, I oversee this annual task, and I take this responsibility very seriously.

The valuation process is, by its very nature, data-intensive. Crunching numbers is an integral part of the job. Luckily, my avocation is a good match for my vocation. I came to the Department of Finance in 1987 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and a minor in Chemistry from Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York. Since then, I have served

in practically every area of the Property Division, first as an Assistant Assessor, then promoted shortly thereafter to Assessor and Review Assessor. More challenging assignments followed: I was promoted to the positions of Assessor-In-Charge for the Bronx, Commercial Team Leader, and, in 2003, to Chief Assessor.

I have always been interested in the way that data can be analyzed, using personal computers and spreadsheets, and I have a reputation as a Microsoft Excel "Power User." I like to share my knowledge in this area; recently, we transformed the division's paper reports into intelligent spreadsheets that allow the division to use data more effectively.

I am also interested in organizational development and the re-engineering of business processes. As Chief Assessor, I assisted former Assistant Commissioner Dara Ottley-Brown with the reform and re-engineering of the Property Division following her appointment. I was also an early participant in the SMART program, serving as a facilitator and as a "coach" when Commissioner Martha E. Stark rolled out the program.

When I can tear myself away from my computer or Blackberry, I love to travel. I am also a boating enthusiast, an avid walker, and, in moments of stillness, a gardener. I'm also something of a "foodie," and, in the opinion of family and friends, a pretty good cook.

LET THE GOOD TIMES "ROLL" IN THE PROPERTY DIVISION

As many of you know, the Property Division is responsible for determining the market value for the more than 1 million properties within the City of New York, both residential and commercial. All properties in the City are valued each year between June and January, and, in mid-January each year, we produce a Tentative Assessment Roll. Every property owner then receives a Notice of Property Value that conveys the new market value and estimated tax assessment for each property.

We are committed to helping people pay the right amount on time by producing fair and accurate market values and by making the valuation process as transparent and easy to understand as possible. One way that we have done this is through significant improvements to the annual Notice of Property Value and the 6-page insert that accompanies it. For instance, taxpayers now receive an explanation of the ways that assessors calculate market value:

Comparative Sales Approach – For the approximately 700,000, primarily one-, two- and three-family homes, appraisals are done by the Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system. CAMA analyzes real estate sales for the past three years. The market value of a given property is based upon sales of similar properties in similar neighborhoods. CAMA maintains a very accurate and up-to-date inventory of existing properties and their physical characteristics.

We also track improvements to properties, using Department of Building computer files on permit activity. Reports are prepared listing new construction, demolitions and major alterations – all of which might affect our estimate or market value – and members of our New Construction Team go on field inspections to determine how such an improvement changes the value of the property.

(Continued at top of page 2)

SMART CORNER

CCS to Launch SMART Education Campaign

What is SMART? What is a SMART card? Am I supposed to be involved in SMART?

If you are feeling a little lost on what the SMART transformation agenda is all about and how it affects your work, you are not alone. A group of Finance employees interviewed in January said that, on average, they understand about 70% of what is being implemented under the SMART transformation agenda and how it will impact their work and the agency's mission. They raised issues such as the distinction between "customer" and "complier," the current status of the transformation, and how each employee at Finance fits into the SMART agenda. The general perception is that Finance has done a fair job in communicating SMART to front-line employees, but more information should be available. And this information should also come through a co-worker or a supervisor that employees know and trust, not just via emails, memos, and the Finance Intranet.

The good news is the Communications and Customer Service (CCS) Division heard the concerns and has put together a plan of action to address them. The plan includes a broader survey of

employees on their understanding of SMART and their needs in terms of further communication that will guide CCS in activities going forward. In March, **SMART Jam**, the first educational activity, will be rolled out across the agency to provide each division with an opportunity to tap to their creative side and come up with enjoyable interactive activities aimed at educating employees about

SMART – activities such as a SMART trivial pursuit, a SMART quiz show, or anything else that divisions can come up with to facilitate the learning. CCS will provide the necessary support in terms of SMART-related information and materials as well as guidance on how to host an event of this sort. CCS has asked each division to nominate an employee who is interested in leading the division's SMART Jam efforts to work with CCS on this exciting event.

CCS's objective is to increase by 20-25% the number of employees who understand what SMART is and help more employees know where to find information about SMART and their division's SMART card. They also aim to implement a mechanism by which employees can provide feedback on SMART. You will no doubt be hearing more about CCS's plans on the SMART Education Campaign in future issues.

SMART FILM SERIES LAUNCHING.

The SMART Film Series continues this month and will eventually be shown in all five boroughs. The films are short and entertaining and provide employees with an opportunity to learn and discuss key SMART concepts related to their everyday work. The films are open to all employees. Free refreshments are served at each showing, and one employee's name will be drawn for a raffle prize at each show. For more information on schedules, locations, and registration for the screenings, please go to <http://financenet/>.



ENTER! NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

This year, the National Women's History Month 2007 theme is "Generations of Women Moving History Forward." The theme will highlight some critically important historic events outside the specific realm of women's rights, including the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the 30th anniversary of the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas. This theme recognizes the wisdom and tenacity of the generations of women who have come before us. These are the shoulders on which current women in government stand. Recognition of these historic anniversaries presents special opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the courage, determination, and steadfastness needed to move history forward.

Can you identify some of these women in government? You will need to identify them by name AND position or accomplishment. Print out this page and write in your answers. Fax your entry to Jayne Lindberg at 212-2332-1890 by March 19th. Please include your own name, your work location, and your work phone number. The first three completely correct submissions received will win a prize and be announced in April's ReveNEWS. Good luck!



(Divisional Corner continued from page 1)

Income Approach – Owners of Class 2 and 4 properties with actual assessed values in excess of \$40,000 are required to submit their financial statements to the Department of Finance each year. Since Class 2's and 4's are income-generating properties, we use these statements to determine the market value of each property. The assessor reviews the income and expenses filed by the property owner in conjunction with income and expenses filed for similar properties and the ranges provided in Assessment Guidelines prepared by our Valuation Policy Unit which reflect the state of the real estate industry. The appraised value is calculated as the income (minus operating expenses) that the Assessor has determined the property will generate over the next year, divided by the capitalization rate (also known as the investor's rate of return) which are also stored in the CAMA.

Cost Approach – This method is used when neither the Income Approach nor the Comparative Sales Approach is appropriate. Examples of properties that would be valued by the cost approach include utility properties and institutional properties such as churches, synagogues and schools. The estimate of value for the property is derived by determining the replacement cost (or the cost of re-construction) less the estimated depreciation for the property. The value of equipment owned by utilities, such as generators and transformers, is appraised by engineers from our Real Estate of Utility Corporations (REUC) Unit and also used in our valuation of these properties.

Over the past year, I am pleased that the Property Division has begun several important new initiatives to serve the public more effectively:

Migration To New CAMA System – We are working with the Office of Technology Solutions (OTS) and with Vision Appraisal Systems in order to migrate to an updated, state-of-the-art CAMA system. Vision's technical staff met with our Team Leaders and is fine-tuning some of the technical aspects. We anticipate that these collaborative meetings will intensify as the system is developed.

Hand-Held Pilot Project – The Team Leaders of Property's New Construction and Technology Teams are working with the OTS and the City University of NY (CUNY) in the design of a State-funded pilot project in the use of hand-held computers for data collection and valuation in the field. Our goal is to have this pilot project under way before the end of the Change By Notice period.

Digitization of Tax Maps – The Survey Unit continues to work with OTS and external consultant Bearing Point on the conversion of New York City's tax maps from paper and mylar to an electronic, computerized format. We anticipate that this project will be completed in 2007.

Most recently, Property has embraced the SMART initiative and established the following four Results Teams:

Condominium Valuation – This team is examining how we can migrate from valuing condominiums on a partial usage (suffix) level to developing fair and accurate values for the condo on a building level.

Building Classes – This team is examining whether Building Classes can be modified to reflect the ongoing changes in how properties are utilized in New York City, and, if so, how this should be done. "Building class" is not the same as "tax class." A property's building class describes that property's current use and sometimes the property's construction type or style.

Better Data – This team is evaluating the quality of the data we already have and will develop strategies towards the collection of new data and resolution of data impurities and errors.

Project/Operational Documentation – This team is working to ensure that sufficient documentation is readily available for the explanation of programming projects and co-op abatement procedures.

Finally, I'm happy to have the opportunity to thank everyone in the Property Division whose hard work and diligence allowed us to complete the 2007 Tentative Assessment Roll on time! Thanks to all!

FINANCE WELCOMES NEW ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

Information Officer – Jane L. Landon

Jane Landon joins the Department of Finance after approximately thirty years in information technology (IT) with the some of the country's most illustrious organizations, including Microsoft, Prudential Insurance, Bankers Trust, Chase Manhattan, and Wang. She brings to Finance her passion for meeting organizational objectives through the use of technology and her many years of IT management experience in financial services. Ms. Landon's



most recent responsibilities as the General Manager of Microsoft's Public Sector Business Systems IT Division make her uniquely qualified to head up Finance's Information System Services (ISS) division and help us use technology to meet our goals. After commuting weekly to Redmond Washington for more than a year, Ms. Landon couldn't be happier to be back in New York, where her heart is.

APRIL IS NATIONAL VOLUNTEERISM MONTH!



In honor of April, we would like to spotlight the efforts of Finance employees who donate their time and efforts to a worthwhile cause (and, perhaps, by doing so, encourage other to do the same). Do you have a volunteer job? Please share it with us for the next issue of

ReveNEWS. Send us a short paragraph about what you do, including the following information: The name of the place or organization you volunteer with, how long you've been volunteering, and what you do. Don't forget to include your name, work location and division, and work phone number. If you have a photo of yourself, we would love to have that also, but only a digital photo, sent to us by email. This is not a contest. It is an opportunity to "celebrate" April and share what we do with our coworkers. Send your paragraphs by email to Jayne Lindberg at lindbergj@finance.nyc.gov or by fax to 212-2332-1890 by March 19th. We'll print as many as we can. We look forward to your submissions.

CITYTIME GOES LIVE ON FEBRUARY 26TH

City Employees Bid Fond Farewell to ETR Forms



On Friday, February 23rd, many Finance employees submitted their last ETR because, on the following Monday, they began using CityTime, the new, electronic timekeeping system. CityTime replaces ETRs, leave request forms, and other paper associated with timekeeping, such as annual leave, sick leave, comp time and much more.

If you have a question about how to use CityTime (or the DCD – the data collection device that scans your hand before you enter your work area), visit FinanceNET, where you'll see the answers to the most frequently asked questions about CityTime and DCD usage.

SHERIFF'S DIVISION JOINS WITH BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Illegal Construction Sites Shut Down to Ensure Public Safety

Construction has been on the upswing in New York City in recent years, both residential and commercial. At building sites, construction companies push to complete the project by a deadline (and, by so doing, maximize their profit). However, if a building site is in violation of a building code, the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) issues a stop-work order, and the construction company must correct the violation or revamp the project. These stop-work orders have always been hard to enforce. Buildings Department inspectors are empowered to enforce stop-work orders, but they do not have the authority to apprehend violators who challenge their power or who continue to defy the work orders.

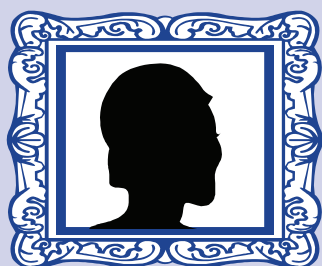
In a pilot program that began in Queens in early December, deputies are working with Building Department inspectors to patrol work sites in which stop-work orders have been issued. If the workers or site owner fail to comply or threaten the inspectors, the deputies can apprehend the individual(s) for obstruction of municipal operations, violation of the original stop-order, and menacing, if applicable.



Undersheriff Peter Talamo, who heads the Patrol Unit of the Sheriff's Division, has a team of four deputies and one deputy sergeant to work with DOB. This team received training from the Buildings Department regarding stop-work orders and the type of violations they are likely to encounter. DOB has been so pleased with this interagency operation that it has requested an expansion. Citizens, who were briefed about the operation at a recent Queens community board meeting, expressed their gratitude for the new effort.

Sheriff Lindsay Eason stated that this is part of the Sheriff's Division mandate to enforce civil laws and improve the quality of life for NYC citizens, in keeping with the mandate issued by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. "I am pleased and honored to assist the Buildings Department in protecting New Yorkers. My deputies add a new and often-overlooked dimension to law enforcement, which other agencies are unable to match. This initiative is a win-win for all, the Buildings Department, the Department of Finance's Sheriff Division, and mostly, the citizens of New York. I thank Commissioner Stark for allowing us to meet this need."

ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS OF THE BLACK HISTORY MONTH CONTEST!



February **ReveNEWS** commemorated Black History Month with a contest of famous African-Americans who were the "firsts" in their field. It was great seeing how many of you entered – the highest participation since our first contest, the Finance crossword – and how many of you did your research.

ReveNEWS also did some research on the controversial Question #11. While we are confident in our "correct" answer, we have decided to eliminate the question, due to the definition of the word "star" and inconsistencies on various web sites. For this reason, the winners are the first three who correctly answered the remaining 14 questions correctly.

Congratulations to *Howard Gross* (Treasury), *Barbara Banks* (Collections), and *Brian D. Keeney* (Adjudication), the first three entrants with all 14 correct responses!

The correct answers are:

1. The first African-American female US Representative was **Shirley Chisholm**.
2. The first African-American female US Senator was **Carol Moseley-Braun**.
3. The African-American inventor of the gas mask and the traffic light was **Garrett Morgan**.
4. The first African-American US Supreme Court Justice was **Thurgood Marshall**.
5. The first African-American Secretary of State was **Colin Powell**.
6. The inventor of the blood bank was **Dr. Charles Drew**.
7. The first female African-American millionaire was Sarah Walker, better known as **Madame C. J. Walker** (Oprah is the second).
8. The first African-American member of the Metropolitan Opera was **Marian Anderson**.
9. The first African American to go into space was **Guion "Guy" Bluford, Jr.**
10. The first African-American Oscar winner was **Hattie McDaniel** (Best Supporting Actress for *Gone With the Wind*).
11. ELIMINATED – See **NOTE** below.
12. The first African-American player elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame was **Jackie Robinson**.
13. The first African American shown on a postage stamp was **Booker T. Washington**.
14. The first African-American heavyweight-boxing champion was **Jack Johnson**.
15. The aptly named African-American who invented the potato chip was **George Crum**.

NOTE: Question 11 asked who was the first African-American "star of a network television show." Most of you said "Bill Cosby," but you weren't even close. Some said "Nat King Cole" for The Nat King Cole Show in 1956, and you were closer. The correct response – in the opinion of ReveNEWS staff – is Ethel Waters, who starred in The Beulah Show from 1950-51. (Hattie McDaniel took over that role when Ms. Waters left the show in '51.) By our calculation, Ethel Waters was first, Hattie McDaniel was second, Nat King Cole was third (1956), Diahann Carroll was fourth (for Julia, in 1968), and Dr. William "Bill" Cosby ran a distant fifth for The Bill Cosby Show, which started in 1984. Even if you considered Bill Cosby a "star" of I Spy (1965), he still would have only been third.

FINANCE OUT AND ABOUT

Dateline New Orleans: On Thursday, February 1st, Commissioner Stark participated in the Federation of Tax Administrators annual mid-winter conference in New Orleans. The FTA's mission is to improve the quality of tax administration through research and information exchange, training, and intergovernmental and interstate coordination. The organization is made up of the principal tax collection agencies of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto

Rico, and, of course, the City of New York. (The Department of Finance is the fourth largest taxing authority in the US – behind the IRS, the State of California, and the State of New York). Commissioner Stark spoke to the group about Finance's transformation to a results-oriented agency with the goal of helping people paying the right amount on time. She spoke about the SMART initiative, surveying, using technology, and focusing on accuracy and accountability.

Dateline Florida: On Thursday, February 22nd, Commissioner Stark and Pension Unit Director Diane Bratcher went to Florida to attend the World Pension Forum, a group that sponsors conferences providing educational opportunities to elite fiduciaries of public, corporate, Taft-Hartley pension trusts and endowment funds. Commissioner Stark chaired one day of the conference, where pension professionals looked at investing in emerging markets in Asia, infrastructure investment, and alternative investments.

WINNERS OF QWL'S "GUESS WHO?" CONTEST



(Left to Right): Craig Woodall (Refunds) – QWL Labor Co-Chair; Donna Billups (Executive); Shantie Ramadhin (Payment Operations); Kevin Burke (Payment Operations) [Not Shown: Contest Winner May Lima-Tsang (Communications & Customer Service)]

Congratulations to Donna Billups, Shantie Ramadhin, and May Lima-Tsang, who submitted the first three entries that correctly matched each name to the correct photo in last month's QWL Name-that-Baby Contest! Each winner received a dandy blue-and-white QWL canvas carryall.

QWL Co-Chairs Craig Woodall and Kevin Burke wish to thank all of you who submitted your photo and who entered the contest. Kevin told **ReveNEWS** that he received a few late baby photos that were not included in this contest, and, he added, "Since it was all so much fun, QWL would like to run another Guess Who? contest in the spring." But they need more photos. If you would like to participate, send your baby or childhood photo to "QWL Guess Who? Part II," c/o Kevin Burke, Payment Operations, 66 John Street – 3rd floor. Be sure to include your name, work phone number and work location, and your age in the photo. The more the merrier!

The correct answers to the contest are:



A. KEVIN BURKE
(Payment Ops)



B. DARLENE FUREY
(Payment Ops)



C. JOHN CONRY
(Payment Ops)



D. IVETTE SPEIGHT
(Payment Ops)



E. JAYNE LINDBERG
(Communications)



F. HOWARD WALVICK
(Communications)



G. THERESA SARRICA
(Communications)



H. MIRIAM PEREZ
(Employee Services)

QWL CAREER & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Diversity Day 2007

Approximately 250 employees attended the 4th annual Diversity Day – International Food Fair on Friday, January 26th at 345 Adams Street in Brooklyn. Attendees enjoyed a sampling of a variety of foods from around the world. Diversity Day is sponsored by the Quality of Work Life Career & Personal Development Committee.

The following employees helped organize and coordinate this event and supplied the



Seated (Left to Right): Jean Jones, Commissioner Martha E. Stark, Johnnie Paylor, Lilly Foy.

Standing (Left to Right): Lakur Prasad, Answorth Robinson, Chandra Mohan, Michael Ramoutar, Rose Horton, FDC Rochelle Patricof, Cheryl Couch, Sheryl Williams, Terri Nixon-Smith, Sheila Williams, Kim Ohanian, Susie Yuen, Karlai Lee.

goodies: Tina Barnes (Employee Services), Gwendolyn Baskerville (Employee Services), Lilly Foy (Adjudications), Chandra Mohan (ISS), Kim Ohanian (Collections), Johnnie Paylor (Collections), Lackur Prasad (ISS), Answorth Robinson (Employee Services), Salena Williams (Payment Operations), Sheila Williams (Employee Services), Sheryl Williams (Payment Operations), Susie Yuen (ISS), and the African American Heritage Cultural Committee.

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME MUCH EARLIER THAN USUAL THIS YEAR



Daylight Saving Time will begin in most of the United States a month earlier than usual this year. On the second Sunday in March (March 11th) move your clocks and watches one hour ahead. (Spring ahead; Fall back.)

We revert back to standard time on the first Sunday in November.

MARCH TRIVIA

Did you know that March is National Noodle Month? National Peanut Month? National Foot Health Month?

Not to mention that, besides the holidays we all know – St. Patrick's Day on March 17th and the first day of spring on March 20th – the month of March has a variety of very odd "holidays" honoring food, including these:

- March 1st** National Pig Day and National Peanut Butter Lover's Day
- March 6th** National Frozen Food Day
- March 14th** National Potato Chip Day
- March 24th** National Chocolate Covered Raisins Day
- March 25th** Waffle Day, and the ever-popular...
- March 31st** National Clams on the Half Shell Day

Also, March 27th is National "Joe" Day. However, this does not honor men named Joe. Rather, if you hate your name, you have the right to ask everyone to call you Joe on March 27th!

DEFERRED COMP SEMINARS WELL ATTENDED!

The QWL Career & Personal Development Committee sponsored Deferred Compensation Lunchtime Seminars in Brooklyn on February 7th and in Manhattan on February 15th. Approximately 85 employees attended the seminars. The committee plans to hold additional sessions.

REVE NEWS

A Monthly Publication of the
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