



**FINANCE
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DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
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REVE NEWS

FINANCE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • SEPTEMBER 2006 • VOLUME 3, NUMBER 5

Divisional Corner

Annette Hill, Assistant Commissioner, City Register



The City Register in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens records and maintains all official records of real and personal property transfers and interests, such as deeds, mortgages, and leases. (In Staten Island, property records are recorded and maintained at the Office of the County Clerk.) These records are used to provide land title ownership ("title search") information for properties in the City. This is important whenever a property is sold, because, to

obtain title insurance, a buyer needs to prove clear title. Without such insurance, banks will not grant mortgages.

ACRIS (Automated City Register Information System), allows anyone to view property-related ownership documents online without having to go to the City Register's Office. It was a challenging transition when the City Register moved from a pre-ACRIS manual system to scanning documents and working electronically in 2003. When I became the City Register in December 2003, the division had fallen five months behind recording property documents. They were buried in paper, and morale was low.

Our divisional goal was clear: get the documents recorded to protect the customers' interests. I met with the deputies of the four borough offices in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens - *Joanne Maya, Mary Scheman, Wanda Nash, and Collette McCain*, respectively - and we decided to work more closely with the external users of ACRIS - the Land Title Association - and to train the public and the staff.

We worked closely with the Office of Technology Solutions to improve ACRIS, including the creation of online New York City and New York State transfer tax applications, automatic calculation of fees and taxes, and subscription services for our commercial customers who retrieve high volumes of images.

Today, thanks to the Deputy City Registers and their staffs, all of our offices are current, and documents, which now can be submitted at any of the four boroughs for recording, are recorded within 3 days of submission. We are currently working with the Internal Revenue Service to process all federal liens electronically. We hope to make the new Exemption & Abatement Application for Owners a part of the recording package at every New York City property closing, so that every property owner knows what property tax exemptions are available, and new owners can enroll in STAR. We are also working with the Legal Affairs Division to change the New York State requirement for original signatures on documents to be recorded. Once this law is changed, the City Register can truly become paperless. I am very proud of the entire division and their hard work.

MANHATTAN CITY REGISTER

Backlog...Challenges...Results!

Faced with a significant backlog of unrecorded documents in every office of the City Register, the Manhattan office tackled the biggest challenge. Besides processing all property-related documents in New York County, they assist more walk-in customers on a daily basis than any of the outer boroughs. The ACRIS Helpdesk and the NYC Transfer Tax Unit are also located in the Manhattan office.

The Transfer Tax Unit was moved to the City Register in the early part of 2004. Formerly called Real Property Transfer Tax (or RPTT), this unit is responsible for collecting the tax that is imposed on the transfer of real property located in New York City whenever the sale or transfer of ownership exceeds \$25,000. The unit processes all NYC transfer tax applications for the four City Register offices and for Staten Island, where there is no City Register. After the unit joined the City Register, they

converted from entirely manual processes to electronic ones. Under the direction of unit supervisor, *Gladys Bonet*, the staff was trained on ACRIS, where they could process the tax records online, and, within four months, the backlog was gone. Administrative costs were reduced, and property records were updated which led to more accurate billing.

The supervisors and staff in the Manhattan office have worked together to resolve the backlog.

Working as a team, and, under the direction of Borough Deputy *Joanne Maya* and Assistant Deputy *Zena Spence*, with the help of the unit supervisors, *Jay Cardona, Sudha Patel, Caressa Olgetree, Yvonne Hassan* and *Laura Salamon*, staff attended training workshops and, based on staff suggestions,

work areas were rearranged for greater efficiency. "*The staff pulled together to work on the results we needed to achieve,*" explained Joanne.



First Row: Jay Cardona, Sandy Perrin, Yolande Pierre, Victoria Ricks, Zena Spence **2nd Row:** Andrea Cox, Milton Escalera, Renee Fryar **3rd Row:** Joanne Maya, Eleanore Hutchins, Gladys Bonet, Robin Sanago, Jennifer Steer, Geneva Fangundo, Ling Fong, Peter Lee, Diane Pasquella **4th Row:** Drita Kane, Darrell Deloney, Darlene Tye-Hicks, Thea Williams, Latonya Rasdell, Karen Berfond, Yvonne Hassan, Lolita Baker, Curtis Peete, Maria Yevseykina, Marcia Harmon, Louis Puccio, Beatrice Citron **Last Row:** Caressa Olgetree, Iris Martinez, Elaine Kavalor

EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!

Find Out About The Special Holiday Edition Of ReveNEWS!

Our December issue will be devoted entirely to the holiday season.

The **ReveNEWS** Ad Hoc committee, who you will see featured in this issue, want to make this special issue truly representative of our readers.

It will be chock full of happy holiday happenings. Publishing this unique "collectors edition" requires your help and your contributions.

Read how you can contribute on **FinanceNet**.



Introducing the ReveNEWS Ad Hoc Committee



Back Row L to R: Adyna Gamboa (Administration), Denise McIntosh (Correspondence), John Mulligan (Legal Affairs) **Front Row L to R:** Rodney Simmons (Collections), Alima Jones (City Register) & Debra Targhi (Correspondence)

After focus groups and the first edition of **ReveNEWS**, a few Finance employees volunteered to work with the **ReveNEWS** staff on future issues. At monthly meetings, they have offered their time, support, and creative ideas.

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

Recent Finance Retirees... & Tier 4 Retirement Information

Recent Retirees – May to October 2006

The following employees have recently retired after many years of City service. Some may enjoy a life of leisure; others may work elsewhere. Whatever they choose, their former colleagues and Finance friends will miss them.

Name	Division	Yrs. of Service
Elizah Abbeyquaye	Adjudication	16
Jamie Angeles	Audit	17
Dinorah Coto	Property	10
Anthony Garcia	ISS	29
Nabil Girgis	Audit	26
Howard Goldfinger	Property	26
Beverly Griffin	Operations	23
Theadoshia Hayes	City Register	32
Charles Hugee	Administration	18
Anthony Locastro	Enforcement	17
Howard Plotkin	Enforcement	21
Paul Przygucki	Audit	29
Louise Rowland	Operations	26
Kamal Zion	Operations	29

Are You Considering Retirement?

If you are thinking about retirement, the first thing you should do is visit the NYCERS' Customer Service Center at 340 Jay Street in Brooklyn. You do not need an appointment, and you will have the chance to meet with a qualified retirement counselor to discuss your pension benefits, including an estimate of your pension allowance under each of the retirement options that are available to you. You may also visit NYCERS' web site at www.nycers.org to read (or print) "Planning Your Retirement" for useful tips, forms, and links to related sites.

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

QWL Book Swap

Did you get a chance to read a new book thanks to the Book Swap on July 14? Read full story on **FinanceNet**.

ENTER!

September Contest – "Famous New Yorkers in Government" Name Scramble

Be one of the first ten people to unscramble the names of famous 20th Century New Yorkers, and win a prize. Deadline is September 15th!



For full contest details see **FinanceNet**.

State Of The Art Body Armor

Keeping Our Civil Enforcement Officers Safe

The Sheriff's Division and the Office of Tax Enforcement recently received new bulletproof vests to protect deputies and tax enforcement agents. Because of her commitment to making sure that Finance staff is as safe and secure as possible as they perform their duties, Commissioner *Martha E. Stark* readily approved the purchase of 138 vests for the Sheriff's Division and 13 for the Office of Tax Enforcement.



Deputy Louis fitting Deputy Sandhovel

The vests represent the latest, high-tech body armor in the security field. This equipment consists of protective panels,

both front and back, constructed of woven Kevlar® and Goldflex®, as well as an impact plate to increase protection. Its design allows the vest to be worn comfortably under a light weight uniform shirt and has hook fasteners that enable the user to make adjustments easily.

When the vests arrived, *Sgt Brian Boyar* and his staff in the Firearms and Tactics Unit fitted the vests to the users and provided instructions on the proper wearing and maintenance of the vests. *Sheriff Lindsay Eason* expressed his appreciation for the procurement of these new vests and "the protection they afford."

Listening Tour...A Chance to Be Heard

On Thursday, August 3, 2006, *Commissioner Martha E. Stark* and *First Deputy Commissioner Rochelle Patricof* held the first of a series of new monthly lunch meetings with Department of Finance employees. The purpose of the informal lunches is to give employees an opportunity to be heard and a better understanding of the SMART initiative and Finance's transformation into an organization that focuses on results. The lunches are also an opportunity for people who work in different divisions of Finance to interact with each other.

During the meeting, employees ate pizza, talked about results they would like to achieve, and shared suggestions on how to accomplish these desired results. Some of the issues that came up were administrative, like divisions needing more equipment (such as computers and printers), while others were operational (such as the need for faster turnaround time by supervisors for

approvals and increased intra-agency communication). Employee recognition and promotion criteria were also discussed.

The participants' comments indicate that this inaugural luncheon was valuable: "Thank you for taking the time to discuss the little (yet big) issues that each of our units need to have addressed," said one. Another participant said, "I am confident that this will lead to results." "The agency is certainly off to the right start," a third noted, and then added, "It was a great idea given the candid discussion we were able to have. I hope all future lunches are as successful."

Employees were selected at random and invited by email, so keep checking your inbox. Maybe you can be part of the next group responsible for helping Finance develop into the world-class customer service operation that New Yorkers deserve.

Finance Blood Drive

Summer is a time for swimming, biking, and vacationing. However, it is also the time when the City's blood supply becomes critically low, and your help is needed. This year, Finance will once again hold an agency Blood Drive to help the City of New York.

Thanks to the hard work of *Michael Pultoian* (Administration) and *Diana Rolon* (Administration), who coordinate the Blood Drives with the help of Finance's **22 Blood Drive Captains**, Finance employees will have an opportunity once again to donate much-needed blood.

The Blood Drives will take place in the following locations:

- *Queens on Thursday, September 14th*
- *Manhattan on Tuesday, September 19th*
- *Brooklyn on Tuesday, September 26th*

Last year, 465 donors participated. This year, so far, we have only 163 donors. So pledge your help now! In addition to performing an important community service, all employees who donate receive 3 hours of compensatory time, as well as the time actually needed to make the donation. There is no substitute for human blood—it can't be manufactured, and people are the only source for others who need it. There is also no substitute for the feeling you can get from giving the gift of life to the accident victims, people with **sickle cell disease**, other **blood diseases** and cancer, and burn patients who will benefit from your generous gift.



Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

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