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July 11, 2007

Bart L. Graham
Commissioner

Hart County Board of Commissioners
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Gentlemen:

Attached please find the "Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors" which was recently completed. This investigation was undertaken by the Department of Revenue at the request of Governor Sonny Perdue pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 48-5-295.1.

I trust that this comprehensive report addresses the concerns of the Hart County taxpayers, county governing authority, board of tax assessors, and other interested persons. It is also clear that significant effort and results are needed to improve the performance of and restore the general public trust in the Hart County Board of Assessors.

Sincerely,

Bart L. Graham

BLG:mb

Enclosure: "Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors"

cc: Hart County Board of Assessors

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors



Department of Revenue

Bart L. Graham
Revenue Commissioner

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION OF HART COUNTY BOARD OF ASSESSORS



**SPECIAL INVESTIGATION
OF HART COUNTY BOARD OF ASSESSORS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of Governor Sonny Perdue¹, the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Revenue ordered an investigation² of the Hart County Board of Assessors. The Commissioner appointed a team of Revenue agents (hereafter referred to as DOR) to perform the investigation, which began on March 5, 2007 in Hart County, Georgia.

Taxpayer complaints and general discontent with the Hart County Board of Assessors (hereafter referred to as BOA) resulted from many years of improper valuation and poor customer service. Additionally, in 2004 the Department of Revenue conducted a Performance Review of the Board of Assessors at the request of the Hart County Governing Authority and since that time substantial improvements have not been made.

In the past 33 years, the various County Governing Authorities in Hart County have appointed 30 different individuals to the Hart County Board of Assessors (BOA). The current BOA is made up of five (5) members; Ms. Anne L. Thompson, Mr. William K. Fogerty, Mr. Roy Segars, Mr. Larry Eugene Crump, and Mr. James B. McMullan. The most senior member is Ms. Thompson who was appointed in 2003. Mr. Fogerty is the current chairman and has served on the board since 2004. Mr. Segars was appointed in 2005. Mr. Crump and Mr. McMullan were appointed since this investigation began in March 2007.

In the opinion of DOR, the Hart County BOA has failed to investigate diligently and ascertain what real and personal property is subject to taxation in the county; has failed to see that all property is returned and assessed for taxes at its just and fair value; and has failed to see that valuations between individual taxpayers are fairly and justly equalized so that each taxpayer pays only their proportionate share of tax. The BOA has failed to require the appraisal staff to follow the requirements and recommendations set forth in the Appraisal Procedure Manual (APM) adopted and maintained by the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Revenue; has failed to properly administer tax exemptions; and has consistently failed to complete its revision and assessment of returns of taxpayers by July 1.

Each BOA must designate a Chief Appraiser, who is charged with the supervision of the staff appraisers. Ms. Margaret Crossley served the various boards of assessors as the Chief Appraiser from 1974 until her retirement in late 2005. Ms. Rebecca Duncan serves as the current Chief Appraiser. Ms. Duncan was originally employed with the Hart County BOA as a staff appraiser in April 2005 and was later designated Chief Appraiser after Ms. Crossley's retirement.

The Chief Appraiser has failed to implement procedures necessary for the efficient operation of the county appraisal staff; has failed to attend hearings of the county board of equalization; and has failed to provide information to the county board of equalization regarding the valuation and assessments approved by the BOA.

¹ See Exhibit 1 - Letter from Governor Sonny Perdue

² See Exhibit 2 - Letter from Revenue Commissioner Bart Graham

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

Each county is required by law to employ a minimum staff of appraisers to perform the essential duties of the tax assessment office. The Hart County Board of Commissioners has not maintained a qualified appraisal staff; does not provide adequate office facilities and has not adequately funded the tax assessment office³.

The Hart County Appraisal Staff has failed to maintain all tax records and maps for the county in a current condition, including mapping, platting, cataloging and indexing of all real and personal property in the county; has failed to prepare annual appraisals on all taxable and exempt property in the county; has failed to properly classify and stratify property as taxable or exempt; and has failed to inspect mobile homes located in the county to determine if the proper decal is attached and displayed by the owner as provided by law.

³ 2006 Hart County Budget Worksheet

FINDINGS

Board of Assessors (BOA)

The Hart County BOA members include; Mr. William K. Fogerty (Chairman), Ms. Anne L. Thompson, Mr. Roy Segars, Mr. Larry Eugene Crump and Mr. James B. McMullan. Mr. Crump and Mr. McMullan are new appointees and have not been part of the BOA long enough to warrant inclusion in this report.

Mr Segars was appointed to the BOA in January 2005 after controversy regarding his failure, over some years, to return his newly constructed home for taxation at fair market value. While DOR primarily rests blame on the BOA for not diligently requiring the proper return of Mr. Segars' home, the effect of the failure of both parties is that Mr. Segars paid significantly less property tax than reasonably due on a newly constructed lake-front home. At the very least, Mr. Segar's appointment to the BOA may create doubt in the eyes of property owners that the BOA will provide uniform and equal taxation of all citizens.

In 2004, a Performance Review of the Hart County Board of Assessors was ordered by the Revenue Commissioner. In late 2005 a response report signed by the majority of the BOA members and submitted to the Board of Commissioners, outlined a plan for correcting deficiencies noted in the Performance Review. Shortly following, a second report for the same purpose was submitted to the Board of Commissioners by the 'dissenting minority' of the BOA members, who complained that they were not notified of the meeting in which the first report was approved. Mr. Fogerty was a member of this 'dissenting minority' and defended this action by indicating that the Majority Response was not detailed and meaningful. In the opinion of DOR, however, the 'dissenting minority' response produced by Mr. Fogerty contains little more than attacks towards other members of the BOA and their effort to correct deficiencies in the digest. This practice is self defeating and confusing to those it is intended to inform. The spirit of cooperation, communication and progress is replaced with argument and accusation.

The Hart County BOA has not operated in a manner which promotes public trust in the tax administration process. The BOA members have resorted to performing individual property appraisals; have developed appraisal methodologies apparently without the assistance or recommendation of the appraisal staff; have acted as appraisers in defending fair market values at Board of Equalization tax appeal hearings; and after approving county-wide reassessments and sending notices to taxpayers, appealed their personally-owned property values claiming lack of uniformity in the digest⁴. Additionally, the appraisal methodologies introduced by some BOA members may have been partially supplied by private citizens who are members of the Hart County Property Owners Association (HCPOA). The HCPOA is an association of property owners seemingly dedicated to the reform of the Hart County Tax Assessment Office. It is believed that Mr. Fogerty and Mr. Segars have sought and used legal council, in matters of tax assessment, from the attorney listed as the registered agent for the HCPOA. Some members of the Board of Commissioners have expressed concern for the Board of Assessors relationship with the HCPOA and their attorney/registered agent. The appearance that the HCPOA has undue influence over the BOA serves to erode public trust in the taxation process.

⁴ See Exhibits 4-A, 4-B, and 4-C - Letters of Appeal of Assessment by Board of Assessors members Fogerty, Segars, and Burdick

In a letter dated January 3, 2006, BOA Chairman William Fogerty requested that the Hart County Board of Commissioners attend a 'jointly chaired' meeting wherein 'seating should be level; no BOC members on raised platform'⁵. The purpose of the proposed meeting would be to establish a positive working relationship for 2006. The Board of Commissioners complied with this request for a 'jointly chaired' meeting and should be commended for their spirit of cooperation. In the opinion of DOR, this request on the part of the BOA chairman appears to disrespect the authority of the County Governing Authority (CGA). The BOA should work diligently to operate independently of politics and absent of any appearance of political influence, favor and power. Moreover, when the BOA resorts to challenging the statutory hierarchy of the CGA, the functionality of the BOA should be reviewed and challenged.

One obvious result of this power struggle is the collapse in communication between the BOA and the County Governing Authority, as evidenced by video tape recordings of various CGA and BOA meetings. The communication between the BOA and CGA during board meetings more closely resembles unproductive argument. The spirit of confrontation, rather than cooperation, is largely represented by Mr. Fogerty and Mr. Segars.

On March 16, 2007, the public notice bulletin board in the assessor's office posted the agenda for a March 2nd meeting. No mention of the March 6th meeting held since or any future agenda or notice of when and where regular meetings are held. DOR found that the BOA meeting schedules and locations did not appear regularly held at the same time and location. Numerous 'special called meetings' and 'executive sessions' were held which is unusual in the tax administration of a small to mid-size county. Many meetings were adjourned, moved to another location and reconvened the same day. On one occasion the same advertised meeting was adjourned and reconvened for three days. Perhaps this causes confusion for taxpayers who may wish to attend; hardship for staff members who must transfer reports and records from place to place and; concern for BOA members themselves who miss meetings. Additionally, memos were discovered by DOR which indicate tax assessment issues are discussed and decisions sought by BOA members outside the official meetings.

As of March 12, 2007, the BOA had not submitted a Manufactured Housing digest to the Hart County Tax Commissioner. The deadline for the mobile home digest submission was November 15th, 2006.

The BOA has not met the requirements of 48-5-299(d) which addresses the level of assessment within the City of Bowersville whose boundaries extend into more than one county. It is the duty of the BOA to cooperatively investigate into whether the valuation of such property is uniformly assessed with other properties located within the municipality. No evidence supports that the Hart County appraisal staff worked cooperatively with adjoining counties to ensure uniform assessments within city limits.

⁵ See Exhibit 5 - Letter from Assessors William Fogerty to Hart County Board of Commissioners
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The BOA minutes document that neighborhoods having no sales data were not updated. Mass appraisal by its very nature requires the application of existing sales of similar properties to other unsold properties. The failure to update regions or areas of the county simply because a neighborhood doesn't have sales is improper when adequate sales data of similar neighborhoods exist.

The BOA has not met the requirements of O.C.G.A. 48-5-306 which requires that "the board shall see that all taxable property within the county is assessed and returned at its fair market value and that fair market values as between the individual taxpayers are fairly and justly equalized so that each taxpayer shall pay as nearly as possible only such taxpayer's proportionate share of taxes." The DOR field review found a concerning frequency of real and personal property missing from the digest and a significant failure to produce a mobile home digest. A conservative estimate of the fair market value of marine craft over 20 feet long registered with the Department of Natural Resources to Hart County residents equals approximately \$131 million based on the ABOS valuation guide. DOR estimates several million dollars in taxable value of marine craft is omitted from the Hart County Tax Digest.

The BOA processing of appeals is improper and disorganized. The appeal paper-trail is difficult to follow. Some final appeal decisions are not reflected in the computer system; hence the corrected value is lost outside of the existence of notations in the BOA minutes. Records were discovered, that indicate appeal decisions rendered by the BOA in 2005 have not been sent to the tax commissioner for final billing as of the date of this investigation. This has been harmful to taxpayers. As an example, taxpayer Arnold Gurley complained that his 2005 account was billed as delinquent⁶ in 2007, when in fact, if the BOA had officially forwarded the two-year old appeal decision to the Tax Commissioner, the corrected assessment would yield a paid tax bill.

The BOA slows the appeal process by holding appeal hearings, contrary to advice from DOR in the past that the BOA should not act as an appellent board. Additionally, individual BOA members are representing the BOA in tax appeal hearings before the Board of Equalization. O.C.G.A. 48-5-263(6) clearly states this responsibility lies with the Chief Appraiser and appraisal staff. The Board of Equalization chairman and appeal record files indicate that the BOA members do not properly defend valuations with a preponderance of evidence. The BOA members are not qualified appraisers and have rarely produced ratio analysis and comparables during the tax appeal hearings.

The BOA has documented in their board meeting minutes the act of voting to approve or disapprove tax abatements, penalties and interest, and refunds. These matters are not under the domain of the BOA. The BOA should consult with the County Governing Authority when their input is solicited, but it is clear in the statute that the authority does not belong to the BOA to issue final judgment on these matters.

⁶ See Exhibit 6 - Letter from taxpayer Arnold Gurley to William Fogerty
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The BOA policies may contain requirements that are contrary to law and the rules and regulations of the Georgia Department of Revenue. One example being a policy which states property owners must declare a value when filing a return. If no value is declared the BOA will not process the return. O.C.G.A. 48-5-15 does address items that must be present on a return; a property owner's declaration of value is not one of those items. It is a good idea for the property owner to declare a value; however a property owner's declaration of 'same as last year' is valid.

Finally, a review of the properties owned by county officials, revealed potentially favorable valuations for some members of the Board of Equalization.

Mapping

Hand-drawn Cadastral Maps or a Computerized Geographic Mapping System must be maintained by the appraisal staff for all real property located in the county. The mapping of real property is the fundamental element of discovery and identification of taxable tangible property in the county and is essential to proper tax assessment. Evidence strongly suggests that the Hart County tax maps are seriously outdated.

Upon arrival in Hart County, DOR requested access to the most current and accurate tax maps available to ensure accurate identification of properties to be field reviewed and to ensure that proper methodology was employed in the maintenance of maps within the office of the BOA. DOR compared the tax maps to the assessment data and performed field reviews of specific properties located in the county. It was quickly apparent to DOR that many parcels of real property were absent or inaccurately drawn on the tax maps. Some parcels may have been omitted from the tax maps, since originally subdivided by deed or plat, as far back as 1999. Tie-bars were observed on the maps which indicate that real property parcels which were not adjacent were combined for taxation⁷. Such a practice can cause incorrect valuation and may result in homestead exemptions being granted to more than one property. When asked 'Who is maintaining the tax maps', the current Chief Appraiser did not know.

The appraisal staff and Chief Appraiser were uncertain exactly which set of maps was the absolute most current. During interviews, staff referenced a rumored set of 'working maps'. These working maps were allegedly the maps maintained by the former Chief Appraiser, Ms. Crossley, upon which new parcels, splits, merges and modifications due to recording of plats were processed. The staff had not seen the 'working maps' in some time and thought they had been removed from the office. After DOR had been on-site for a few days, the Chief Appraiser produced another set of paper maps which depicted red-inked, hand-written drawings of new parcels. These maps appeared to be the lost set of 'working maps'. The working maps are slightly more current than the original set of maps provided to DOR, but are also seriously substandard and unacceptable for proper tax assessment.

In prior years the previous Chief Appraiser, Ms. Crossley, maintained a Computerized Mapping System. This digital mapping system was developed using AutoCAD software with some assistance from Keck & Wood Engineering firm. The AutoCAD digital maps were housed on a computer that was found to be disassembled and sitting on top of a file cabinet in a back storage room. The current Chief Appraiser, Ms. Duncan, and staff stated that for some time they did not know the password to gain entry to this computer and were unsure of when the last updates to the digital AutoCAD files were performed.

The County must implement a county-wide remapping project. A large amount of confidence cannot be given to the existing Cadastral Maps or Computerized Mapping System. Positive identification of each parcel of real property is essential for accurate appraisals. Extensive deed and plat research will be required to correct the errors inherent in the Hart County maps.

⁷ Exhibit 7 - Tax Map showing non-adjacent combined parcels

Appraisal of Real Property

The appraisal staff is required by law to follow the provisions of the Rules and Regulations established and maintained by the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Revenue when appraising property. DOR Rules and Regulations include the Appraisal Procedure Manual (APM) which requires the county appraisal staff to consider the sales comparison, cost, and income approach in the appraisal of real property. The degree of dependence on any one approach will change with the availability of reliable data and the type of property being appraised.

The APM instructs the appraisal staff to maintain general descriptive information on each property including ownership, location, size, use, physical characteristics, sales prices, construction costs and rents and operating expenses. With regard to land and location characteristics, the appraisal staff shall maintain records regarding zoning, use, legal or deed restrictions on use, covenants, parcel shape and size, neighborhood, view, topography, corner influence, proximity to recreational bodies of water, nuisances and similar external influences. With regard to improvement characteristics, the records shall include size, actual use, design, construction quality, construction materials, age and observed condition. Furthermore, the appraisal staff shall provide for periodic field inspections to ensure that property characteristic information is complete and accurate. All real property parcels should be physically reviewed at least once every three years to ascertain that property information records are current.

DOR agents performed field reviews of agricultural, residential, industrial and commercial property. The field reviews encompassed approximately 25 county maps and hundreds of parcels in various and random areas of the county to ensure a fair representative finding. DOR found significant issues regarding missing new construction, missing old construction, misapplication of effective year built, misapplication of quality of construction, and inconsistent values on lots and acreage tracts in both unincorporated and incorporated areas of the county.

In review of the descriptive information included in the current assessment records, DOR found that the data elements collected are tailored to an appraisal software application previously used in Hart County. This previous appraisal software appears to employ methodology which may not be in compliance with the APM; specifically regarding rural land, quality of construction and usage of 'condition factors'. In 2005, the BOA converted the data characteristic files from the previous software application to the DOR supported WinGap Appraisal System. Many characteristic fields between the two appraisal models are not totally compatible.

Additionally, DOR performed a sales ratio analysis which indicated that sales-chasing had taken place in the past in Hart County. Sales-chasing is an improper tax appraisal maneuver where reassessments are made to properties which have recently sold, while properties which have not sold are either not reassessed or receive lower value changes.

DOR concludes that a comprehensive county-wide reappraisal must be implemented to ensure that all property is assessed at its fair and just value, so that each taxpayer pays only their proportionate share of tax.

Land - Agricultural/Rural large and small tracts:

- Acreage tract sales were not plotted on an index map of the county in order to trend sales prices based on size and location and to properly establish homogeneous market areas. In lieu of this acceptable method of establishing market area, the BOA delineated 26 geographic areas for 'ease of field review'.
- No evidence was found which supported the requirement that the value of timber had been removed from qualified sales when the large acreage land schedule was developed.
- Land valuation for large tracts was not developed by analysis of woodland and cropland, even though agriculture is a prevalent land use in the county.
- No evidence or support was found, for a determination of the acreage breakpoint which delineates a small tract from a large tract.
- The small acre size adjustment table appears to be a standardized table. There is no evidence that this small acreage table has been established through the evaluation of sold properties as prescribed by the Appraisal Procedure Manual (APM). Little consideration has been given for size adjustment on acreage tracts.
- A seemingly arbitrary 'condition factor' had been applied to the base land unit value of large tracts. No documentation clearly supports the basis for application of condition factors.

Land - Residential Lots:

- The BOA appears to have given higher priority to lake property appraisal despite equally non-uniform and non-accurate appraisal practices throughout the county, as evidenced by sales ratio studies performed by DOR.
- Although the BOA apparently focused mainly on lake property valuation, DOR found many lake lots to be undervalued as indicated by recent sales. Some lots were appraised at less than half of market reflection. This appears to be caused by the lack of adjustments made for differences in characteristics such as; lake-frontage, water accessibility, easements or lot size.
- Many interior lake lots were valued at less than \$10,000 when sales indicated a higher value. Interior lake lots are defined as lots which have lake access or view but no lake frontage.
- DOR found the development of neighborhood analysis severely lacking. The improper delineation of neighborhoods caused disparity in assessments among similar properties.
- Seemingly arbitrary 'condition factors' were applied to the base land unit value of residential land and lots. No documentation supported the basis for the condition factors applied prior to 2005. Since 2005, the BOA has adjusted the 'condition factors' for properties within certain lake-front neighborhoods. Those recent adjustments appear to account for topography, view, dockability on Lake Hartwell, and acceptability of the lot to support improvements. It is not clear what basis is used to apply condition factors in other areas of the county.

Improvements - Residential:

- DOR found an overall misapplication in the estimation of effective age for residential improvements throughout the county. Homes which were originally constructed 20, 40, or 60 years ago and which were found to be in various states of modification or deterioration were all appraised as if effectively built in 1985. Using such a widespread assumption of age and depreciation for older improvements has caused inequitable valuations.
- It was evident that the residential valuation schedule used for pricing newly constructed residential improvements was grossly understating the value of those improvements throughout the county.
- Several newly constructed improvements, ranging from carport additions to new residential homes were not listed on the digest. Additionally, some homes and structures that were listed on the tax digest no longer existed and should have been removed from the tax records.
- Estimation of grade or quality of construction appeared to be inconsistent county-wide. Many homes that were undervalued or overvalued were also improperly graded.

Land and Improvements - Commercial and Industrial:

- Commercial and industrial valuations appeared to have been developed by an outside contractor. While this may be acceptable, no documentation was found to support the basis of value conclusions for commercial and industrial property.

Appraisal of Personal Property

Georgia law requires the appraisal staff to identify personal property, determine its taxability, and classify it for addition to the tax digest. Each return by a property owner shall be for property held and subject to tax on January 1 of the tax year. The Hart County Appraisal Staff should develop and maintain information sources for the discovery of unreturned personal property and see that each account is audited once every three years as recommended in the Appraisal Procedure Manual (APM)

Business furniture, fixtures, machinery and inventory

The methods of discovery for business personal property used by BOA staff include obtaining; the City of Hartwell business registration list; notices and advertisements in the local newspaper; and building permits. No business license is required by the county. No field reviews are being conducted.

Approximately 600 business accounts are listed on the 2006 digest and in 2007 business personal property reporting forms were mailed for 652 accounts. At the time of this investigation, the 2007 business personal property reporting forms filed by taxpayers were being reviewed by BOA staff. Taxpayer returned values are accepted with little or no verification. There are currently no audits or detailed desk reviews of personal property accounts being performed. From those interviewed it appears no accounts have been audited since 2003.

Freeport is an exemption from taxation on certain qualified inventory. This inventory exemption for manufacturers and distributors is granted by the state and local county government in order to promote economic growth. A new Freeport exemption application must be sent to any entity that was approved for Freeport exemption by the BOA for the preceding tax year. BOA staff indicated that, in 2006, the Freeport Applications were not mailed to property owners as required in the APM. Freeport applications were mailed timely for 2007. DOR reviewed the 2007 Freeport applications and questioned whether some of the accounts actually qualify for Freeport.

Marine Craft

The Department of Natural Resource marine craft registration list was printed by BOA staff in 2006 to assist in the discovery of taxable marine equipment for 2007. This DNR report lists all marine craft registered to Hart County residents. The Hart County personal property appraiser only added and appraised year models 2004 and newer, due to time constraints and because staff estimated the newer model boats were more likely to be taxable. According to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources boat registration list, 4,289 boats are registered to residents of Hart County. Although the county includes miles of lake-front property, only 1,776 boats were assessed in Hart County for 2006. A comprehensive plan to discover unreturned and taxable marine craft is essential. Not just those listed on the DNR report for residents but those functionally located in the county and owned by non-residents. The DOR estimates that marine craft valuation missing from the digest may total millions in taxable assessed value.

The past valuation method for marine craft in Hart County also causes concern. For tax year 2005, boats were appraised using the ABOS guide, a widely-known pricing guide. The valuations derived from ABOS were further depreciated using an in-house depreciation schedule. This process created double depreciation and may not have resulted in fair market value. In 2006, boats were appraised using ABOS market guide found in the WinGap appraisal system.

Aircraft

The appraisal staff does not employ a reliable method for discovering taxable aircraft. The values returned by taxpayers on aircraft are accepted by the BOA and staff. The BOA staff currently has no means for aircraft valuation, even though widely-known pricing guides are easily available and relatively inexpensive. Hart County has two fly-in communities, but only 5 aircraft were listed on the 2006 tax digest. At the time of this investigation, the personal property appraiser indicated that 14 aircraft had been discovered for 2007. The Federal Aviation Administration's list of registered aircraft is free and available online in seconds. FAA currently shows 24 aircraft registered to Hart County residents⁸.

⁸ See Exhibit 8 - FAA Aircraft registration list for Hart County

Homestead Exemptions

Exemptions from property tax are granted to residential applicants who own and reside on real property within the county. An applicant seeking homestead exemption must file a written application on or before March 1 of the year in which the exemption applies. The applicant must sign an oath attesting to their residency and qualification. The exemption will continue from year to year provided the property and owner continue to qualify.

As allowed by law, the Hart County Tax Commissioner has delegated the authority to receive Homestead Applications to the Hart County BOA. The approval or denial of Homestead Exemption is also made by the BOA.

DOR reviewed Homestead files and applications and found the following:

- Many applications are not signed by the applicant.
- Many applications are not dated.
- Most applications have no indication of BOA approval.
- One property was noted as denied, but no notice of denial is found in the property record file and no evidence of appeal rights given to the applicant.
- Some applications did not properly identify the real property for which the homestead was applied.
- Many applications were not signed by a receiver.
- Many applications were not completely filled out.
- Some applications were received one day and marked 'granted' with staff appraiser initials dated the next day. This raises concern as to whether the BOA was meeting and approving homesteads as required by law or if a staff member alone was making the final decision to approve or deny.

An email was received by DOR in early 2007 from Chief Appraiser Rebecca Duncan which indicates that the BOA and staff were not aware that the deadline for Homestead Exemption applications had been changed by law from June 1 to March 1 effective June 1, 2005.

DOR reviewed lists of owners receiving homestead exemption in Hart County. The review included searches and checks for the following;

- Duplicate Homesteads – Exact owner names appearing on more than one real property record and receiving Homestead Exemption and Home Owners Tax Relief Credit.
- Questionable Qualification of Owner – Owner names having 'LLC', 'INC' and 'Bank' included in the owner's name who are also receiving Homestead Exemption and Home Owners Tax Relief Credit.
- Out of County – Owners receiving Homestead Exemption and Home Owners Tax Relief Credit who have a primary mailing address outside Hart County.

This review revealed that there may be approximately 130 owners who are receiving a reduction in their property tax assessment and the Home Owners Tax Relief Credit, when they may not be qualified⁹. Using the typical State reimbursement in Hart County for Home Tax Relief Grant of \$137, the estimated annual loss to the State of Georgia due to those potentially unwarranted exemptions is approximately \$18,000.

⁹ See Exhibit 9 – Listing of questionable homestead exemptions

Exempt Digest

In addition to valuing all taxable property in the county, the BOA is also required to produce an exempt digest of assessments. The 2006 Exempt Digest includes 379 properties. Upon review of the Hart County exempt property digest, DOR found significant discrepancies¹⁰. Over Thirty (30) parcels were classed and stratified as E9 and noted as 'taxed in Franklin, Elbert or Madison County'. These E9 properties are owned by individual taxpayers and no valid reason was found for exempt status in Hart County.

Another 15 properties found on the exempt digest may not qualify as exempt from ad valorem taxation as specified in O.C.G.A. 48-5-41 and 48-5-41.1.

Examples of potentially unqualified property listed on Exempt Digest include:

- Vacant seemingly un-buildable subdivision lots in the name of a developer
- Vacant land owned by a church and which is not adjacent to the main church campus and apparently not used for religious purposes
- A residential home owned by an individual taxpayer
- A medical office building leased to group of doctors.
- A vacant lot with a posted sign advertising 'office space for lease - coming soon' and which is owned by a 'for profit' corporation.
- A Regional Arts Center which advertises art work for sale.
- The Daughters of Confederacy clubhouse.
- Hart Telephone Company
- Oglethorpe Power Company
- Vacant lot in City of Hartwell owned by an individual taxpayer.

¹⁰ See Exhibit 10 - Portion of Exempt Digest showing property coded exempt erroneously
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Mobile Home Digest

The fair market value of mobile homes must be determined by the county board of assessors in accordance with the regulations adopted and maintained by the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Revenue. It is the duty of the county appraisal staff to annually inspect each mobile home located in the county to determine if the owner is properly displaying the decal evidencing the issuance of a mobile home location permit. On or before November 1 of each year the BOA shall meet to receive and inspect the tax returns and location permits for mobile homes and approve the values for the following year. On or before November 15 of each year, the BOA shall submit to the tax commissioner the mobile home digest, together with the proposed assessments for the following tax year. Any owner who contests the assessment of ad valorem tax may file an appeal within 45 days from the date of the mailing of the tax bill.

As of March 2007, the Hart County BOA appraisal staff has not inspected each mobile home and the BOA has not submitted the mobile home digest to the tax commissioner which was due November 15, 2006. The records maintained by the BOA regarding the mobile homes which exist in the county are inaccurate and incomplete.

Appraisal Staff

Per O.C.G.A. 48-5-263 the county appraisal staff shall make appraisals of all taxable property in the county; maintain records and maps for the county in a current condition; prepare annual assessments on taxable property and submit for approval to the BOA; prepare annual appraisal on all tax-exempt property in the county and submit to the BOA for approval; prepare and mail assessment notices after the BOA has determined the final assessments; attend hearings of the county board of equalization; provide information to the Department of Revenue as requested; attend approved training courses as approved by the Revenue Commissioner; compile sales ratio data; comply with the rules and regulations of the Department of Revenue and inspect and appraise all mobile homes in the county.

Hart County is a Class IV county with 17,424 parcels of real estate and an estimated 4000 to 5000 potential personal property accounts. By law, the minimum appraisal staff requirement for a Class IV county includes (1) appraiser III, (1) appraiser II and (1) appraiser I. Currently the Hart County tax assessment office has not met the minimum requirement. Those few staff members currently employed by the County are inexperienced. In the opinion of DOR, meeting only the minimum legal requirement of staffing level will require the county governing authority and the BOA to consistently out-source or contract mapping, personal property auditing and real estate appraisal work.

The International Association of Assessing Officials (IAAO) has published appraisal staffing recommendations and standards for the proper administration of an assessment office. The IAAO recommends parcels-per-employee ratios of 2,500-to-one for real property and accounts-per-employee ratios of 2,200-to-one for personal property.

Office Facilities

The BOA and appraisal staff must have the facilities needed for effective tax administration. In the opinion of DOR, the current facility provided to the BOA is inadequate. The office is not comfortable, attractive, or orderly. The arrangement of work space does not encourage teamwork, promote self-esteem, or prevent distractions so that each employee can work efficiently.

The Chief Appraiser should have a private office. Currently the Chief Appraiser, Rebecca Duncan, must share an office with the personal property appraiser. The workspace for the personal property appraiser is more like an extension of Ms. Duncan's desk rather than a proper work station.

File and storage space is not sufficient. The BOA has specific requirements for the retention of records and is often called upon by taxpayers and other agencies to produce copies. Locating and retrieving documents is severely restricted due to the improper maintenance of records in the office. It appears that one or more property record file folders are kept for each real parcel. The files are located in the front office and in a back storage room. These property record files contain field cards, computer generated printouts, appeal records, building permits and exemption applications. The mixture of various types of documents within each file makes it difficult to follow the series of steps taken by the BOA and staff when processing any individual appeal or exemption application. When real estate is transferred from one owner to another a new file is sometimes created.

An unrecorded conservation use covenant was observed in one file. Granting a conservation use tax exemption without recording the covenant could prevent the BOA from assessing a penalty if the covenant is later breached. Pending tax appeal files are kept in baskets on the floor and later filed in with the other property records. Homestead cards are kept in a small storage closet in mix-matched drawers which have no drawer stops to prevent injury.

There is virtually no mapping space. Usually tax assessment offices have a significant number of maps with research areas available for staff and members of the public. County maps, city maps, zoning, land use and lake maps should be displayed for the benefit and use of all interested parties.

A small table in a storage room is the only location available within the assessment office for the BOA to hold their meetings. Having meetings off-site is cumbersome and time consuming for staff members, who must transport reports and records out of the office for review by the BOA. There is no waiting or seating area for taxpayers who wish to speak with an assessor or appraiser. One taxpayer complained that he had to stand up during his appeal hearing before the BOA.

Computer Hardware/Software

The system hardware in the Tax Assessors Office is adequate to handle the current situation. However, the absence of anti-virus software on some of the computers should be addressed as promptly as possible. Also, the backing up of the appraisal data in WinGAP is critical. All efforts should be made to schedule backups on a regular basis and periodically confirm the backup was successful. Relying totally on reports generated from the backup is an absolute means of loosing data somewhere in the future.

The following is a listing of the current computers being used in the Hart Co Tax Assessors Office. The specifications of each computer are detailed below:

Computer Name/Identification	File Server
Mfg/Model	Dell Power Edge SC 430
CPU	Information not available
RAM	Not available
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	237 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	235 GB
Operating System	Windows Server 2003 R-2
System Backup	DAT 72 Tape Backup
Printer	HP LaserJet 5000N
Uninterruptible Power Supply	none

Computer Name/Identification	Rebecca (Rebecca)
Work Group	ACCESSOR
Mfg/Model	Dell Optiplex GX 520
CPU	Pentium 4 (3.4 GHz)
RAM	1 GB
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	160 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	149 GB
Operating System	Windows XP-2002 SP2
Printer	HP DeskJet 820 Cse
Uninterruptible Power Supply	None
Monitor	17" Flat Panel
Auxiliary Software	FoxPro 9.0, Office 2003
Anti-Virus	Norton (no firewall)

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Computer Name/Identification	Conf. (Kris)
Work Group	ACCESSOR
Mfg/Model	Dell Optiplex 170L
CPU	Pentium 4 (3.2 GHz)
RAM	512 MB
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	80 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	74 GB
Operating System	Windows XP-2002 SP2
Printer	None
Uninterruptible Power Supply	None
Monitor	15" Flat Panel
Auxiliary Software	Office 2003
Anti-Virus	None

Computer Name/Identification	Station4 (Elizabeth)
Work Group	ACCESSOR
Mfg/Model	Dell Optiplex 170L
CPU	Pentium 4 (3.2 GHz)
RAM	512 MB
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	80 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	71 GB
Operating System	Windows XP-2002 SP2
Printer	HP DeskJet 5440
Uninterruptible Power Supply	None
Monitor	15"
Auxiliary Software	WordPad
Anti-Virus	None

Computer Name/Identification	Dell3 (Terry)
Work Group	ACCESSOR
Mfg/Model	Dell Dimension 4600
CPU	Pentium 4 (2.8 GHz)
RAM	512 MB
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	80 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	66 GB
Operating System	Windows XP-2002 SP2
Printer	None
Uninterruptible Power Supply	None
Monitor	15"
Auxiliary Software	WordPerfect, Quattro Pro 11
Anti-Virus	Norton

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Computer Name/Identification	Dell4 (front desk)
Work Group	ACCESSOR
Mfg/Model	Dell Dimension 4600
CPU	Pentium 4 (2.8 GHz)
RAM	512 MB
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	80 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	71 GB
Operating System	Windows XP-2002 SP2
Printer	None
Uninterruptible Power Supply	None
Monitor	15" Flat Panel
Auxiliary Software	WordPerfect, Quattro Pro 11
Anti-Virus	Norton

Computer Name/Identification	Dell5 (front office back)
Work Group	ACCESSOR
Mfg/Model	Dell Dimension 4600
CPU	Pentium 4 (2.8 GHz)
RAM	512 MB
Hard Drive – Total Capacity	80 GB
Hard Drive – Free Space	72 GB
Operating System	Windows XP-2002 SP2
Printer	None
Uninterruptible Power Supply	None
Monitor	15"
Auxiliary Software	WordPerfect, Quattro Pro 11
Anti-Virus	Norton

Appeals

There is established in each county a Board of Equalization (BOE) who shall hear and determine appeals from assessments and denial of homesteads exemptions of taxpayers who have disputed the assessment produced by the BOA. Although, the Board of Equalization does not fall under the authority of the BOA, DOR felt compelled to include a review of the tax appeal process afforded to taxpayers in Hart County.

DOR is disturbed by the Hart County Board of Equalization (BOE) notification letter¹¹ to property owners which contains the following language.

During your tax hearing, it will be your responsibility to convince the Board of Equalization members that your property value has been set too high by the County Board of Assessors. It is important for you to state the value of your property. It is important for you to provide support for your opinion of the value of your property to the Board when you have your hearing. Bring with you any documents in your possession pertaining to your property value and any photos of your property you may wish to present at the time of the hearing. Remember, it is not sufficient just to state that you feel the property value has been set too high, you must present supporting evidence. If you are unable to attend the hearing on the date and time scheduled, you must notify the BOE Secretary by phone at 706-856-5350 or by mail prior to the date of the hearing. If you are unable to appear in person and or desire to have someone represent you at the hearing, you must submit the name of the person in writing prior to the date of your scheduled hearing.

With passage of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights in 2000, the burden of proof is now on the BOA. When the BOA changes the value returned by a property owner, the new law places on the BOA the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, the validity of the change. This burden continues to be on the BOA even if the appeal goes to superior court, although the judge is not bound to either the assessors' or the property owner's value when determining, or having determined by a jury, the question of final value.

The Board of Equalization appointment letter seems to clearly place the burden of proof on the property owner. Furthermore, interviews of the BOE confirmed that should the property owner fail to bring evidence forward, an automatic judgment was rendered in favor of the BOA. The appeal decisions rendered by the Board of Equalization are vague, often referring to some change to be made in the appraisal data base – but giving no final valuation.¹²

Individual BOA members have been representing the BOA at Board of Equalization tax appeal hearings, in place of the Chief Appraiser and appraisal staff. Interviews and documentation indicate that the BOA did not sufficiently support valuations as required by law.

¹¹ See Exhibit 11 - Board of Equalization notice of hearing letter to taxpayers

¹² See Exhibit 12 - Board of Equalization decision letter

2004 Performance Review of the Hart County Board of Assessors

In 2004 the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Revenue ordered a Performance Review of the Hart County BOA at the request of the Hart County Governing Authority (CGA). Since the Performance Review was completed, DOR agents have discussed, advised, and cautioned the BOA on several occasions. The following grid shows the progress of the recommendations made in the report issued as a result of the 2004 Performance Review:

PRB Findings / Recommendations of the 2004 Report	DOR Investigation follow-up
The Performance Review Board (PRB) found that all county officials believe that there exists a good working relationship between all offices and officials. The former county administrator complimented the Board of Assessors on its presentations and their justifications for budget requests.	The relationship between the Board of Assessors and Board of County Commissioners has deteriorated to a point that very little is being accomplished.
The PRB found that certain members of the Board of Assessors did not meet the legal qualifications for certification. Specifically, each member of the Board of Assessors must successfully complete Course I or the assessor qualification examination within the first year of appointment. Two members of the Board of Assessors have not met this qualification.	Chairman Fogerty last attended training in 2005. The two new members have not attended the certification course as of this date.
The PRB found that the county has taxed personal property with a total fair market value of less than \$7,500 even though this property is not subject to taxation. The statutory change was approved by statewide referendum in November 2002 and was effective for 2003 taxes.	Was corrected for the 2006 digest.
The Commissioner's review of the 2002 tax digest found a lack of uniformity for commercial and industrial property classes based on the sales ratio study performed by the State Auditor. Hart County must correct this for 2005 or be subject to a specific penalty of approximately \$83,000. The Board of Assessors has already put into effect a plan to correct this for 2004.	The 2005 ratio analysis indicated that commercial and industrial values and uniformity improved – but residential assessments lacked uniformity. A ratio analysis performed by DOR on 1/8/2007 indicated a severe lack of uniformity in the preliminary 2007 data files.
The PRB feels that the practices of the Board of Assessors with regard to the handling of appeals filed by taxpayers may be unduly cumbersome and lengthy. Taxpayers also commented that the facilities used by the Board of Assessors to conduct informal hearings were inadequate in that space was severely limited.	This continues to be a problem.

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

PRB Findings / Recommendations	DOR Investigation Follow-Up
<p>The PRB does not believe it is necessary for the BOA to meet individually with appellants to determine whether a change is indicated or if the appeal should be forwarded directly to the board of equalization. However, the BOA should meet with those taxpayers requesting a meeting before the board. Normally, assessments are reviewed by the appraisal staff and recommendations made to the board. During the period following the issuance of change of assessment notices, the BOA should meet periodically to review the recommendations of the appraisal staff on any appeal already received and either approve any change that requires a new notice to be issued or forward the appeal on to the Board of Equalization.</p>	<p>The BOA continues to hold tax appeal hearings with property owners as an appellant board.</p> <p>Ideally the appraisal staff should field-check all appealed property and recommend any needed changes to the BOA.</p> <p>Property owners are notified of changes and are given further appeal rights.</p> <p>Appeals with no recommended changes should be forwarded to the Board of Equalization.</p>
<p>With the exception of the above, the Board of Assessors appears to otherwise be in compliance with Georgia law.</p>	<p>The BOA is not approving all value changes and is not equally and fairly distributing the tax burden (OCGA 48-5-306)</p>
<p>It is the opinion of the PRB that some small acreage tracts (4 – 10 acres) adjoining the impoundment of Lake Hartwell are undervalued. The Board of Assessors and Chief Appraiser should review the methodology employed and consider alternative methodology that includes the development potential for these tracts.</p>	<p>The methodology developed and employed by the BOA to appraise lake lots does not appear to producing fair uniform values. All appraisal methodology should be produced by the appraisal staff and follow requirements in the APM.</p>
<p>There exist individual property valuations that need adjustment or modification due to some inconsistencies in data gathering by the county appraisal staff. But otherwise, the appraisal techniques employed by the county were found to be acceptable.</p>	<p>This process of data gathering has greatly deteriorated.</p>
<p>The Hart County Property Owner's Association insists that a lack of uniformity exists in the county's appraisals of residential property; especially properties adjoining the impoundment of Lake Hartwell. However, the PRB found that the majority of the criticisms leveled by the Hart County Property Owner's Association were primarily subjective judgments in the appraisal process. Other than noted above, substantial material errors in the methodology employed or the general application of this methodology did not exist.</p>	<p>A lack of uniformity does indeed exist, but in the entire county; not only in the Lake Hartwell area.</p>
<p>The PRB noted that while the CGA had approved funding to upgrade the computer hardware, it had not approved funding for the BOA's request for additional personnel and had in fact reduced the amounts budgeted for training. These last two issues, in the judgment of the PRB, are significant as they relate to some of the criticisms presented to the PRB by the Hart County Property Owner's Association and concerned citizens.</p>	<p>The proper funding for this office has not been forthcoming from the County Governing Authority.</p>

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

PRB Findings / Recommendations	DOR Investigation Follow-Up
<p>The county appraisal staff employed by the BOA, while meeting statutory minimums, is insufficient to meet the needs and challenges of the county. The appraisal staff should consist of at least four full-time certified appraisers and two full-time clerical staff.</p>	<p>Additional qualified staff is still needed.</p>
<p>In addition to increased staff, another major issue is the lack of formal training for the current staff. The Chief Appraiser is the only individual on the staff that has attended training regularly and therefore has become the primary source for information from the office. This is problematic when the Chief Appraiser is away from the office or engaged with important duties.</p>	<p>Improvements have been made in training; however the Hart County BOA has not been able to retain qualified appraisers on staff.</p>
<p>All members of the county appraisal staff need to attend certification training. While the statutory minimum is 40 hours every two years, the PRB feels that this is insufficient to promote a knowledgeable and capable staff, especially when the current staff is relatively inexperienced. Additionally, the members of the BOA are not maintaining the required training levels so that they may be fully informed and competent to carry out their duties.</p>	<p>Some improvement has been made.</p>
<p>This situation is a direct consequence of inadequate funding to attend training, which has resulted in the county now facing the refunding of thousands of dollars in taxes. This might have been avoided if a member from the BOA or the Chief Appraiser had attended the annual legislative update held each spring in Athens. At this workshop, changes in the laws governing property tax administration are presented and discussed.</p>	<p>The Chief Appraiser and two members of BOA attended the 2007 CAVEAT in Athens.</p>
<p>The PRB observed that the office space of the BOA is inadequate for a county this size. There is insufficient space afforded each employee and a lack of private offices for those individuals that meet with the public. This severely inconveniences those taxpayers wishing to present confidential information to the appraisers to support their returns.</p>	<p>This problem continues to exist.</p>
<p>One question posed to the PRB by members of the CGA was "should the Board of Assessors change software used by the county appraisal staff to the state sponsored appraisal software?" This is not as simple a matter as it may seem. The change from one appraisal system to another is problematic at best. One outcome is guaranteed, all property values will change. There are also issues involving accuracy of the data conversion, workload, training and the time it takes to learn to use a new system. While the county will have to update its obsolete hardware by 2005 regardless of the software it chooses, it may be more cost effective and productive for the county to upgrade its current mini-computer based NovaLIS software to the new PC based NovaLIS software.</p>	<p>The conversion to WinGAP is complete, however the characteristic data collected by field appraisers and used within the appraisal software is largely inaccurate.</p>

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

PRB Findings / Recommendations	DOR Investigation Follow-Up
The Performance Review Board believes that the office of the Hart County BOA is generally operated in a manner consistent with other similarly situated counties.	Hart County continues to have more appraisal and mapping problems than most counties in Georgia.
The PRB recommends that the CGA remove from the Board of Assessors Ms. Florence Gaines and Ms. Anne Thomson as provided in O.C.G.A. § 48-5-295 (b). Both have failed to meet the qualifications provided in O.C.G.A. § 48-5-291 and Department of Revenue Substantive Rule 560-11-2-.31 (2). The board of county commissioners may choose to fill those vacancies or reduce the number of members on the BOA to three.	Ms. Anne Thompson was not removed from the BOA as recommended, but has completed the appropriate assessor training.
The PRB believes that if the CGA reduces the number of members of the BOA to three, the reduction may allow for the necessary funds to provide additional meetings as well as partially pay for the training of the remaining members of the BOA. Additionally, the PRB believes that more oversight by the BOA and interaction with the appraisal staff would be beneficial in resolving some of the other issues identified in this report.	The Hart BOA still consist of five (5) members. The PRB recommendation that the BOA oversee and interact with the appraisal staff, was meant to enable the board to make more informed decisions – not to micro manage the appraisal work or to have the BOA individually appraise property.
The PRB believes that the BOA is bound by law to correct the illegal assessments made for personal property with a total value of less than \$7,500. The BOA should create an error and release document for each occurrence and forward these to the tax commissioner so that a refund can be made to those taxpayers illegally taxed.	It appears this problem has been corrected.
The PRB believes that all covenants for conservation use should be carefully scrutinized by the BOA prior to approval. The BOA should establish written policies in accordance with Georgia law for this process and for other situations as they occur. These written policies should be kept in a book and made available to the public.	A policy and procedures manual has been developed. The BOA should have the county attorney review the adopted policies and make recommendations for revisions.
The PRB believes that complete documentation of the methods employed by the BOA to appraise property, including techniques used and all schedules and tables should be bound and kept in a book. This book should also be made available to the public.	Some appraisal techniques and methods have been added to the policy and procedures manual.
The PRB recommends that the CGA provide necessary funds so that the BOA and county appraisal staff are able to attend certification and customer service training. The PRB believes that this will increase the professionalism of the staff so that they may better attend to their duties as well as the needs of the public. Additionally, at least one member of the BOA and the Chief Appraiser should attend the annual legislative update held in Athens each spring.	The CGA has not properly funded or staffed the assessors' office.

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

PRB Findings / Recommendations	DOR Investigation Follow-Up
The PRB recommends the appraisal staff consist of one (1) Appraiser III or IV, who serves as Chief Appraiser and who is responsible for the day to day supervision of the rest of the staff, the development of land tables and building base rates for the properties adjoining the impoundment of Lake Hartwell and to review valuations of property performed by subordinates.	The BOA has designated a Chief Appraiser who has an appraiser III designation. Evidence that the Chief Appraiser has developed schedules and base rates is not prevalent.
The PRB recommends the appraisal staff consist of one (1) Appraiser III, who is responsible for developing land tables and building base rates for the remainder of the county, all personal property appraisals and to assist the Chief Appraiser in the review of property valuations.	This position has not been added.
The PRB recommends the appraisal staff include two (2) Appraiser II positions to perform all initial field data collection.	BOA has one appraiser I and one part time appraiser III performing most of the field work.
The PRB recommends that the clerical positions be responsible for gathering deed information, assigning parcel numbers, maintaining the county tax maps and providing information to the public.	The BOA has one clerk. The mapper/appraiser I position is vacant and should be replaced as soon as practical.
The PRB believes that more than one employee in the office should be able to provide requested information to the public. Written requests for most existing reports and other readily available documents are not normally necessary. However, this recommendation is not intended to conflict with the Open Records Act or the Taxpayer Bill of Rights.	This problem has been corrected. It is our recommendation that the county immediately place their appraisal records online for viewing which will reduce open records requests and foot traffic in the office.
The PRB recommends that the BOA and CGA provide software training to the staff so that more employees are able to produce reports and provide documentation to the public as well as take full advantage of the technology and equipment they possess.	Additional training is still needed.
It is the PRB's recommendation that the county updates the computer hardware in the BOA's office and the appraisal software to the PC based NovaLIS - Assessment Office package. The PRB believes this is the most appropriate action in order to retain the integrity of the tax records and maintain the knowledge and level of comfort already possessed by the county's appraisal staff.	In summary, the BOA's system hardware is adequate to handle the current situation. The absence of anti-virus software on some of the computers should be addressed as promptly as possible. Also, the backing up of the appraisal data in WinGAP is critical. All efforts should be made to schedule backups on a regular basis and periodically confirm the backup was successful. Relying totally on reports generated from the backup is an absolute means of loosing data somewhere in the future.
The PRB recommends that the BOA review its procedures in handling appeals, particularly when a revaluation is completed and an exceptional number of appeals filed, so as to allow the board of equalization to hear and determine appeals according to law.	All appeals should be field checked by the appraisal staff and any changes needed recommended to the BOA for approval. Those properties with changes should receive a 21-day notice and the remainder of appeals should be forwarded to the board of equalization.

Review of Lake Front property in South Carolina

DOR reviewed property in South Carolina adjoining Lake Hartwell. The purpose of the review was to attempt to make a comparison between the valuation of lake front property in South Carolina and the lake front property in Hart County.

The valuation of property in South Carolina is governed by South Carolina law which differs greatly from Georgia appraisal law and procedures. South Carolina assessment levels vary by property type and use. The assessment ratios are found below in a table obtained from the South Carolina Department of Revenue website.¹³

Manufacturing Property	10.5% of fair market value
Utility Property	10.5% of fair market value
Railroads, Private Carlines, Airlines and Pipelines	9.5% of fair market value
Primary Residences	4.0% of fair market value
Agricultural Property (privately owned)	4.0% of use value
Agricultural Property (corporate owned)	6.0% of use value
Other real estate	6.0% of fair market value
Personal property	10.5% of income tax depreciated value

The highlighted rows are applicable to potential lake front property included in DOR's review.

The comparison included the analysis of three randomly selected lake front developments totaling 114 lots. To eliminate unnecessary variables, the analysis ignored sales including improvements and included 26 vacant land sales. The sale transaction years range from 2001 through 2006. The sales bank was combined for all years and compared individually to four separate valuation cycles. The sales ratio analysis was performed on a neighborhood level and the results follow.

0110401	MEDIAN				COD			
	3.0000	3.0000	3.0000	3.0000	0.2420	0.2420	0.2420	0.2420
	AVERAGE				PRD			
	3.3454	3.3454	3.3454	3.3454	0.9719	0.9719	0.9719	0.9719
	AGGREGATE				43 parcels			
	3.4420	3.4420	3.4420	3.4420	7 vacant sales (01, 04, 05, 06)			

¹³ <http://www.sctax.org/Tax+Information/property/prop.html#assratios>

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0020302	MEDIAN	1.3200	1.3800	1.3800	1.3800	COD	0.2937	0.3248	0.3248	0.3248
	AVERAGE	1.5360	1.6112	1.6112	1.6112	PRD	0.9751	1.0023	1.0023	1.0023
	AGGREGATE	1.5753	1.6074	1.6074	1.6074	28 parcels 11 vacant sales (01, 02, 04, 05, 06)				
0320101	MEDIAN	2.0968	2.0968	2.0968	2.0968	COD	0.2024	0.1795	0.1795	0.1795
	AVERAGE	1.8178	1.7697	1.7697	1.7697	PRD	0.9078	0.9041	0.9041	0.9041
	AGGREGATE	2.0025	1.9574	1.9574	1.9574	43 parcels 8 vacant sales (04, 05, 06)				

The appraisal accuracy of the randomly selected neighborhood from South Carolina would be sub-standard using Georgia accuracy standards.

The next observation made in the South Carolina data is the lack of property value updates made. Generally the property values remained stagnant over the four valuation cycles reviewed. The 114 total lots reviewed had only 15 value changes from 2003 through 2006. Reduce the window to include only three valuation cycles and the number of changes is reduced to only 5 properties of the 114 that had a land value change.

Given the lack of property updates, the sub-standard appraisal accuracy, and the variation in the laws impacting and governing the appraisal of property in South Carolina, the ability to form valid and logical conclusions in any comparison of the valuation of South Carolina lake front land to Hart County lake front land is limited.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Persons Interviewed

- Hart County Board of Commissioners
 - R. C. Oglesby
 - Ken Brown
 - Dan Reyen
 - Gary Mize
 - Joey Dorsey
 - Hart County Administrator Jon Caime
- Hart County Attorney Walter Gordon
- Hart County Board of Assessors
 - Bill Fogerty
 - James McMullan
 - Roy Segars
 - Anne Thompson
- Don Burdick – Former Hart County Commissioner, Former Hart County Tax Assessor
- Former Hart County Tax Assessors
 - Missy Carter – also a former Hart County staff appraiser
 - Randy Combs
 - Hedrick Isley
 - Robert Wesley
- Chief Appraiser Rebecca Duncan
- Former Chief Appraiser Margaret Crossley
- Kristen Byrum, Staff Appraiser
- Tom Peebles, Hart County Board of Equalization Chairman
- Burl Pierce, Hart County Tax Commissioner
- Bruce Grant, Hired Consultant
- Wayne Blackwelder, DOR field agent
- Grant Hilton, DOR field agent
- Hart County Property Owners and Concerned Citizens
 - Pete Nagle
 - Jay Earle
 - Robert Techo
 - Dorothy Hall
 - Howard Holt

Documents and areas reviewed

- BOA meeting minutes for calendar years 2004, 2005 and 2006
- Property appeal files for tax years 2002 through 2006
- Tax digest adjustment records which include errors, releases and not-on-digest
- Tax maps
- A consultant report dated January 2007
- The 2005 and 2006 exempt digests and 2007 exempt files
- Personal property accounts including Freeport
- Manufactured home digest
- Staffing levels and training status reported by the Georgia Certification Program
- Sales ratio studies performed by the Georgia Department of Audits for tax year 2002 through 2005
- Digest assessment audits performed by the Department of Revenue for tax years 2002 through 2005
- Various other records provided by individuals
- Onsite field inspections of all classes of property
- Toured the offices of the BOA and reviewed appraisal, mapping and customer services areas.
- Homestead exemption applications
- Conservation Use exemption applications

2003 Budget memo

2006 Change of Assessment list - green bar

2005 Change of Assessment list - green bar

2004 Change of Assessment list - black 3-ring binder

2005 Personal Property Change of Assessment list - green bar

Novalis correspondence folder - approx 4" thick file

BOA policy manual - white 3-ring binder

BOA minutes 2002 and 2003 - black 3-ring binder

BOA minutes 2005 (Jan through July 19) - black 3-ring binder

BOA secretary notes - black 3-ring binder

Pocket folder -minutes approved, old business,Dec 6 minutes, Secretary folder, floppy 2005 minutes

2005 appeal corrections - (tax digest adjustments) white 3-ring binder

2005 digest corrections - (tax digest adjustments) black 3-ring binder

2004 Land line book (Co1 - C50) - Black 3-ring binder

2006 digest corrections A-J - (tax digest adjustments) black 3-ring binder

2006 digest correctionsK-Z - (tax digest adjustments) black 3-ring binder

2003 digest corrections (Cott screen shots - pocket folder 1 of 3)

2003 digest corrections (Cott screen shots - pocket folder 2 of 3)

2003 digest corrections (Cott screen shots - pocket folder 3 of 3)

2004 digest corrections (Cott screen shots - pocket folder)

2005 digest corrections (Cott screen shots - pocket folder)

2005 digest corrections - Mobile Homes (Cott screen shots - pocket folder)

Long Tax Return Report - Personal Property 2005

2002 Budget files - black 3-ringer binder

2002 Budget red folder - wrapped in rubber bands

2003 Budget brown folder

Budget overall folder (2002 and 2003)

2004 Budget brown folder - wrapped in rubber bands

2005 Budget folder

2002 - 2005 Budget forecast reports

2005 BOA minutes July 19 - Dec 20 - 3-ring black binder

2004 BOA minutes - 3-ring black binder

2006 BOA minutes - 3-ring black binder

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Rebecca's Cott Manual - gray 3-ring binder
2004 prebill mobile home digest - black Castleberry binder
2005 prebill mobile home digest - orange Castleberry binder
Various 2005 TBS digest reports
Correspondence Keck & Wood
Correspondence Various invoices
Correspondence Novalis folder
Correspondence Duplicating Proc Inc folder
Correspondence Cott/Novalis folder
Correspondence 2005 returned notices of value change
Correspondence Address corrections
Correspondence - audit folder - empty
Correspondence Armour Cape and Fond aerial flight
Correspondence BOC 1 of 2
Correspondence BOC 2 of 2
Correspondence BOA memo
Correspondence 2005 Board of Assessors
Correspondence Earle Jay
Correspondence Peer Review
Correspondence Gordon Walter
Correspondence Perry Brown
Correspondence Clerk of Court
Correspondence Corp of Engineers
Correspondence Hix Phil
Correspondence Cannady Jerry
Correspondence Fant Financial Services
Correspondence Jeff Davis
Correspondence WKLY
Correspondence Misc
Correspondence Dan Reyen
Correspondence General
Correspondence Wasserman Harvey
Correspondence Techo Robert
Correspondence Combs Randy
Correspondence Tax returns
Correspondence City of Royston
Correspondence GA open records
Correspondence Enron
Correspondence Flagship GIS
Correspondence Walter Gordon (A)
Correspondence Walter Gordon (B)
Exemption report/double exemption
State of GA - GA department defense
Correspondence DOR Wayne Blackwelder
Correspondence DOR email
2005 Digest
Original copy of 2004/2005 report (growth)
City of Hartwell Zoning Book
2004 assessment notices - undeliverable
Concerned Property Owners of Hart County
CUV list with values

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

Correspondence - BOA
Maps - see contents list
2004 Digest A - Krim
2004 Digest Krim - Z
2005 Digest A - J. Kotal
2005 Digest J.Kotal - Z
2006 Digest A - G.King
2006 Digest J.King - Z
2004 Digest C01-C08
2004 Digest C09-C16
2004 Digest C17-C20
2004 Digest C21-C23
2004 Digest C26A-E
2004 Digest C27-C29
2004 Digest C30-C32
2004 Digest C33-C35
2004 Digest C36-C39A
2004 Digest C39A-C41
2004 Digest C42-C43
2004 Digest C44-C47
2004 Digest C5248-C
2004 Digest C53-C54
2004 Digest C55A-C55D
2004 Digest C56-C57
2004 Digest C58-C60
2004 Digest C61-C64H
2004 Digest C65- C66
2004 Digest C67A-G
2004 Digest C68A-D
2004 Digest C69A-H
2004 Digest C70-C72
2004 Digest C73-C77H
2004 Digest C78A-79F
2004 Digest C80-C82G
2004 Digest C83-C86
2004 Digest C91-C99
2004 Digest I56B-I56L
2004 Digest I56N-P
2004 Digest I57B-I57F
2004 Digest I57G-P
2004 Digest I69-O
2004 Digest I70A-C
2004 Digest I70E-M

RECOMMENDATIONS

<i>Board of Assessors</i>

1. The BOA must focus on its duties and responsibilities as outlined by Georgia law and Rules and Regulations and operate as a unit, working together toward a common goal of fair and uniform taxation. A spirit of cooperation with all county officials is imperative. Unity and a cooperative effort are not present in the current BOA.
2. The BOA must implement a county-wide re-mapping of all real parcels in Hart County.
3. The BOA must implement a county-wide reappraisal of all taxable tangible property in Hart County.
4. The BOA must see that procedures are implemented for the diligent discovery of taxable personal property and must require the proper appraisal of personal property.
5. The BOA must see that proper and timely mobile home digests are submitted annually to the tax commissioner.
6. All meetings of the BOA must be properly advertised and all decisions adopted in open board meetings except those matters specifically allowed by law for Executive Session. Ease of access to meetings and records of the BOA is important when fostering trust among the property owners of Hart County and other boards.
7. The BOA should, as a unified group, examine the policies and procedures of the office and allow a qualified Chief Appraiser to execute those policies and procedures. The Chief Appraiser must attend to the daily operation of the appraisal staff and the office of the board of assessors. The individual BOA members must realize that individually, they have no authority beyond that of a typical citizen. The 'board' is the entity that has the authority and responsibility – not the individuals.
8. The BOA, through cooperation with the CGA should provide online Internet access to appraisal records. Providing online access to appraisal data will greatly reduce foot-traffic in the office of the BOA, allowing appraisal staff, contractors, and board members to focus on the tasks and recommendations in this report. Online access will be a great service to the property owners by giving them open access to the tax appraisal process and would allow searching of records by owner name, parcel identification number, location address, legal description, and sales search. The property information available online should include, when available, owner name, mailing address, location address, digest class and strata, neighborhood, parcel number, tax district, acres, homestead exemption, land value, improvement value, accessory value, total value, previous value, land segment information, improvement items with core information to include improvement sketches, improvement photos (when available) accessory items with core information, sales information (sale date, deed book & page, plat book & page, sale reason, grantor, grantee, sale price) and permit information.

9. The BOA should rewrite and, in some cases, eliminate current internal policies with the assistance of the county attorney and Chief Appraiser. The BOA should maintain a book of adopted internal policies which should be made available to the staff and public. A BOA policy of requiring a recorded plat for any assessment acreage corrections may place an undo hardship on taxpayers in both time and money. Other documents can reasonably serve to assist the BOA in the determination of acreage. The BOA policy which requires the approval of the chairman of the BOA before documents may be provided to individuals who have made a request via Open Records Act has placed staff in difficult situations.
10. The BOA members must strive to become educated in tax assessment and at a minimum must successfully complete 40 hours of continuing education hours for each two years of tenure as required by law.
11. Removal of Mr. Fogerty and Mr. Segars from BOA is recommended, either by removal proceedings described in statute or by not reappointing the assessors at the end of their terms which expire 12/31/2007. These assessors are attempting to micromanage the appraisal of property and have cast doubt on the objectivity of the BOA and its ability to effectively and efficiently comply with state law in the administration of property tax. The DOR has previously cautioned the assessors against acting in the capacity of appraisers.
12. BOA members must cease the development of unacceptable appraisal methodologies.
13. The current Chief Appraiser seems to rely on the practices and procedures of the previous administration rather than embracing the role of the job and implementing policies and procedures for the efficient operation of the tax office. On numerous occasions the Chief Appraiser stated she didn't know how or why things were done a certain way. The Chief Appraiser must have a complete understanding of the appraisal process and Georgia Property Tax Law. The Chief Appraiser must be qualified to appraise all property types and should have managed at least one reappraisal of an entire county before assuming the job. The Chief Appraiser must be a strategist and have the ability to plan the work of subordinates to accomplish the desired results.
14. The Chief Appraiser should submit to the BOA an Annual Report that includes sales ratio studies and goals for timely submission of the tax digest. A written status report should be submitted to the BOA on a monthly basis with any deficiencies noted, along with corrective measures as may be necessary to stay on plan. These reports should be made part of the official minutes of the BOA. The BOA and Chief Appraiser should consider more frequent revaluations to meet minimum standards for digest submission.
15. The Chief Appraiser should maintain a manual containing written documentation of the appraisal methods used by the staff and approved by the BOA, including the appraisal techniques used and all schedules and tables with clear descriptions for each. The manual should be available for review by the staff and public.

Mapping

The BOA, with funding from the Hart County Board of Commissioners, must implement a county-wide remapping program. Accurate and positive identification of each parcel is essential for accurate appraisals.

A revaluation project is also recommended and will be discussed later in this report. However, the mapping project must be complete or mostly complete before the revaluation project may begin.

The county should receive prior approval and direction from DOR if the revaluation program commences before the mapping project is absolutely complete. DOR would like Hart County to utilize state-of-the-art maps in the revaluation of the county so that the community can be assured of a reliable product. DOR experience in this area indicates the best way to accomplish quality work is by contracting with a quality mapping company.

The mapping contractor must have experience in Tax Map Cartography, in addition to the technical engineering skills required to generate electronic layers of data such as soil types, elevation, road and highway information, etc. It is equally important that the chosen contractor employs a sufficient number of competent staff to handle the magnitude of problems in the Hart County maps.

Furthermore, it is important that the county and contractor are clearly aware that extensive deed and plat research will be required to correct the errors inherent in the Hart County maps. A large amount of confidence cannot be given to the existing AutoCAD files. The contractor must make parcel-by-parcel reconciliation between the CAMA (computer assisted mass appraisal) data, AutoCAD digital map files, 'working map' hardcopy maps and recently-flown aerial photography. The property lines for each parcel in the county must be rectified to aerial photography. The County Governing Authority (CGA) must provide substantial financial support in this matter.

1. Minimum mapping specifications shall include street, roads, railroads, streams and lakes platted and identified; property lines delineated for each parcel; a unique parcel identifying number assigned to each parcel; lot and block numbers for all subdivision lots; county and city corporate limit lines identified; and physical dimensions and acreage estimates for each parcel. The parcel identifying number will be used to link real property assessment records to the maps.
2. In the event the County Governing Authority establishes a separate mapping office and the maps conform to these requirements, the appraisal staff may provide relevant information to such county mapping office and still be in compliance with DOR regulations.
3. The appraisal staff should notify the Revenue Commissioner of all proposed changes to existing parcel identifying numbers before implementation. Changing parcel identifying numbers is not recommended by this DOR review team.

4. Hart County should convert the existing AutoCAD maps to ESRI mapping software layers. To assume the AutoCAD digital maps are accurate enough to be used as a base map is not proper as these digital files contain numerous errors and omissions in their current form. The conversion of the AutoCAD files to ESRI digital files provides a starting point from which Hart County can begin deed research, splits, corrections, parcel combinations, and comparisons.
5. While new commercially flown digital orthographic aerial photography is the most accurate option, Hart County may choose to use 1-meter color imagery available from the Georgia GIS Data Clearinghouse at a savings of several thousand dollars. This imagery is available today in 2-meter resolution with annual availability of 1-meter imagery available starting in 2007.
6. The CAMA data from WinGAP will also be a critical component of the mapping process. The CAMA data, though certainly not perfect, will be the best source of the most current existing parcels and can serve as a comparative tool with the mapping data to assist in locating missing parcels. Reconciliation between CAMA data and maps is required due to the fact that many splits have not been mapped at all, yet some record of the splits exists in the CAMA database. The reconciliation process will help ensure all properties currently listed on the tax digest are added on the tax map.
7. The reconciliation process from tax map back to CAMA data is also needed to ensure that parcels which exist on the maps, but not listed in CAMA data, are added to assessment records for valuation and taxation.
8. In the future the Chief Appraiser must ensure that PT61 real estate transfer tax documents, deeds, and tax maps are promptly and correctly processed by staff; either by assigning the task to a staff member or contracting long-term with a mapping company.

Appraisal of Real Property

The DOR review concludes that a comprehensive county-wide reappraisal by a qualified and competent appraisal company is necessary. Many properties are not correctly listed on the digest and many properties and improvements are completely missing from the digest to the degree that no confidence can be given to the overall quality of the appraisal characteristics stated in the Hart County assessment records. The lack of qualified appraisers on staff in Hart County prevents the BOA from performing a revaluation in-house.

All property must be assessed at its fair and just value, so that each taxpayer pays only their proportionate share of tax. Evidence shows that essential land and building characteristics are incorrect and missing on a large number of property assessments in Hart County. The failure to accurately identify land and building characteristics has significantly affected the levels of assessment, bias, and uniformity in the Hart County Tax Digest. The BOA, with funding from the Hart County CGA, must implement a county-wide reappraisal of all real property.

1. DOR recommends that the CGA contract with an appraisal firm to perform parcel-by-parcel onsite inspections of all real property in the county per BOA specifications. The Chief Appraiser must review the appraisal firm's work for consistency.
2. This onsite inspection performed by the contracted appraisal firm should include a photo of each improvement front and back; and a complete detailed measurement of each improvement, along with a determination of size, actual use, design, construction quality, construction materials, age, and observed condition.
3. Additionally, the onsite inspection must include a determination of land characteristics with regard to accessibility, desirability, zoning, use, legal or deed restrictions on use, covenants, parcel shape and size, neighborhood, view, topography, corner influence, proximity to recreational bodies of water, nuisances and similar external influences.
4. When an onsite inspection by the contracted appraisal firm or BOA staff discovers a mobile home included in a real property assessment record, the Chief Appraiser shall make a determination as to whether to leave such mobile home classed as real property. This determination shall be according to the rules and regulations of DOR regarding homesteaded mobile homes. Non-homesteaded mobile homes which have not been issued a Certificate of Permanent Location shall be assessed on the Mobile Home digest. All mobile homes that have not been issued a Certificate of Permanent Location must display a current decal issued by the Hart County Tax Commissioner.
5. The appraisal contractor must perform a sales analysis and employ the valuation methods required in the APM when developing the valuation schedules for land and improvements.

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

6. The Revenue Commissioner has adopted and maintains the Appraisal Procedure Manual (APM) for use by staff when appraising tangible real and personal property. The BOA must require the Hart County Appraisal Staff to adhere to the APM and all other rules and regulations of the Georgia Department of Revenue. All of which have the same force and effect as law.
7. The Chief Appraiser must immediately develop and submit to the BOA a written comprehensive work plan for implementation of the contracted revaluation. This work plan must include training of all personnel on the WinGap CAMA system. A written work plan status report should be presented to the BOA on a monthly basis with any deficiencies noted, along with corrective measures as may be necessary to stay on plan.
8. The Chief Appraiser and staff must attend the WinGAP training courses to facilitate in meeting this recommendation.

Appraisal of Personal Property

The Chief Appraiser shall designate at least one staff appraiser to be responsible for the appraisal of tangible personal property. This individual must be trained in the discovery and appraisal of personal property.

1. The personal property appraiser must successfully complete the following GCP Certification courses: Course III, Basic Accounting, Verification of Personal Property, and Advanced Auditing.
2. The job duties of the staff member designated as the personal property appraiser should be primarily focused on the diligent discovery and proper valuation of taxable tangible personal property.
3. The appraisal staff must implement policies concerning field reviews for the purpose of discovering business, boat, and aircraft personal property accounts.
4. The appraisal staff must obtain a listing semi-annually of the business licenses issued by the City of Hartwell and any other municipality that issues business licenses.
5. The appraisal staff must develop a policy for the in-house auditing of business personal property and submit that policy to the BOA for approval.
6. Once the policy for audit is approved by the BOA, the Chief Appraiser and designated personal property appraiser must ensure that personal property accounts are audited once every three years as recommended in the Appraisal Procedure Manual.
7. The BOA must obtain a sales tax listing from the Department of Revenue to assist in the discovery of business personal property.
8. The personal property appraiser must contact all marinas and dry storage facilities and obtain listings of those individuals who store boats in the county. This will enable staff to find taxable boats functionally located in the county, but owned by non-residents.
9. The personal property appraiser should also perform periodic searches of non-homesteaded, lake front properties within the WinGap system in order to discover unreturned marine craft of non-residents.
10. The personal property appraiser will utilize the ABOS pricing module integrated in WinGAP in the appraisal of all boats when sufficient information exists to use ABOS.
11. The personal property appraiser must review the Department of Natural Resources boat registration listing, utilizing the DNR integrated module of WinGAP.

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

12. The appraisal staff must obtain the Federal Aviation Administration's aircraft listing for Hart County and a listing of hangered aircraft at the two fly-in communities.
13. The BOA must obtain widely known pricings guides to assist the personal property appraiser in the valuation of boats, aircraft, motor vehicles, and heavy duty equipment.

Homestead Exemptions

Improper administration of Homestead Exemptions can significantly impact the tax digest. It is imperative that adequate and constant research is performed to ensure that only qualified applicants are granted Homestead Exemptions.

1. The BOA and Chief Appraiser must stay informed on changes in the law, not only in homestead issues but in all aspects of ad valorem taxation.
2. The Chief Appraiser must efficiently administer the homestead application process according to rules, regulations and law.
3. The BOA must officially approve or deny each homestead application.
4. The BOA must formally notify applicants of denial of exemption and must afford those applicants the due process of appeal.

Exempt Digest

The Exempt Digest must be thoroughly reviewed prior to the sending of assessment notices and prior to the submission of the tax digest to the tax commissioner on July 1. As staff appraisers transfer and value property throughout the year it is possible that properties are miscoded through error and inexperience. The BOA and Chief Appraiser must keep a watchful eye on the proper classification and stratification of all property. Additionally, when exempt status was granted in prior years for reasons not known to the current BOA, the board has a duty to see that the property is properly returned for taxation.

1. The Chief Appraiser and BOA must review all properties appearing on the Exempt Digest list and ascertain on what grounds each property listed should maintain its tax exempt status.
2. O.C.G.A. 48-5-41 details those properties which are exempt from taxation; many properties reviewed by DOR do not fit those details. When there is question or concern, the Chief Appraiser must research the issues regarding the property and may request additional documentation and explanation from the property owner.
3. For those properties which are found to be taxable and added to the taxable digest, a notice of value should be sent to the owner.
4. For those properties which cross county lines, part in Hart County and part in another county, the land and improvements which are located in Hart County should be assessed in Hart County and the part that is located in other counties should be assessed in that county. None of the property located in Hart County should be exempt unless it belongs to an exempt entity.
5. For those properties which are located in Hart County and currently not being assessed, DOR recommends that the BOA consult the county attorney for a proper method of requiring the taxpayer file a return in accordance with O.C.G.A. 48-5-17.

Mobile Home Digest

The 2006 Hart County tax digest included 874 mobile homes assessed at \$7,557,953. For mobile home digest for 2007 was not produced by the BOA on November 15, 2006 as required. This failure will negatively impact the taxpayers as well as the 2007 digest submission.

1. The BOA must meet and review the mobile home valuation methods, returns of taxpayers and location permits issued. The valuation method approved by the BOA must be in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Georgia Department of Revenue.
2. The appraisal staff must inspect, photograph and make notes regarding the make, model, year and other characteristics of each mobile home in the county. The county appraisal staff shall also determine at the time of inspection whether the most recent digest decal is properly affixed and displayed.
3. The appraisal staff must present the mobile home valuations to the BOA for approval by the deadline specified in the Rules and Regulations and must also submit the approved mobile home digest to the tax commissioner for billing by the specified deadline.

Appraisal Staff

The BOA must provide for a comprehensive system for the equalization of taxes within Hart County by establishing a competent, full-time staff to assist the board in developing the proper information for setting tax assessments. All appraisal staff must maintain the continuing education requirements of state law and rules and regulations of the Department of Revenue. Maintaining required continuing education should be a condition of employment. With funding from the Hart County CGA, the BOA must hire and train a quality staff. Not only has the staffing of the BOA not met the minimum requirement of O.C.G.A. 48-5-262 for a Class IV County, the staffing level falls critically below the recommendations of the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO).

1. The IAAO standard on Mass Appraisal of Real Property establishes the following recommended staffing for real property appraisal. "...parcels-per-employee ratios greater than 2,500-to-one (1,500-to-one in very small jurisdictions and 3,500-to-one in very large jurisdictions) should be viewed with some concern. Similarly, a parcels-per-appraiser ratio greater than 5,000-to-one may cause concern."
2. The IAAO standard on Ratio Studies establishes the following recommended staffing for personal property appraisal. "One employee should be assigned for every 2,000 – 4,000 accounts. The appropriate number depends on the complexity of the appraisal requirements, such as inclusion of intangibles, inventories, household goods, agricultural products, motor vehicles and complex exemptions." Experience shows that in Georgia, accounts-per-employee ratios greater than 2,200-to-one (1,500-to-one in very small jurisdictions and 3,000-to-one in very large jurisdictions) should be viewed with some concern. Similarly, an accounts-per-appraiser ratio greater than 4,000-to-one may cause concern.
3. Once the huge effort has been made by the contracted appraisal firm to update the structure characteristic data by methodically field reviewing properties parcel-by-parcel, the BOA staff appraisers must ensure that property characteristics reflected on the records maintained by the BOA remain accurate in the future by field reviewing every real parcel at least once every three years. Additionally the personal property appraiser must audit each account once every three years as it would be inequitable to reappraise real property and not to require the proper return of personal property.
4. The Hart County CGA must pay adequate salaries and provide sufficient facilities and equipment in order to maintain a qualified appraisal, mapping, and clerical staff.

Office Facilities

The current facility is not sufficient. In addition, the DOR recommended county-wide revaluation will require additional office space necessary to handle the inquiries of taxpayers.

1. It is strongly recommended by DOR that the Hart CGA and BOA relocate the assessment office to a facility which will afford the staff enough space to properly operate an efficient and effective tax assessment office.
2. The Chief Appraiser should consider a more open and efficient office floor plan. If possible, consult an architect who is skilled in office design.
3. The facility should be designed to maintain safety and security of staff and records.

Computer Hardware/Software

There are adequate computers for the current office staff. For the most part, the system has good response time and there is more than adequate hard drive capacity on the server to handle the needs of the office for some time to come under the current operation. However, more equipment and software will be required as additional staff members are hired.

1. The older Dell Dimension computers should be replaced with newer models as finances allow. This is not an urgent need but one that should be considered in the budgeting process.
2. All monitors that are not flat panels should be replaced with new flat panel monitors. Work space is currently at a premium and flat panel monitors would increase the amount of available work space. Again, this is not an urgent need but should be considered during budgeting.
3. Several of the computers are lacking standard software compliments such as the Microsoft Office suite. This tool should be added as budget and time permits.
4. Anti-virus software should be installed on the two computers that are now lacking this type of security. Given the frequency of internet access and email operations, anti-virus software is almost critical in order to prevent malicious software or viruses from being introduced to the system.
5. All of the system's computers should also have a firewall installed unless there are some assurances at some other level that a firewall is in place to prevent undesired access to the system.
6. In the near future, the county should consider purchasing and installing Advantage Database Server (ADS). It is anticipated that other county offices will desire to connect to the data source in the Tax Assessors Office. ADS would facilitate that process by transforming WinGAP into a client/server operation and providing better management of database access and the network data flow. The cost of ADS is a one time expense and is dependant upon the number of user licenses purchased.
7. A tape backup is installed on the File Server, however, no tapes were found to confirm the scheduling of the backup. Ms. Duncan, the Chief Appraiser, was absent at the time of this inspection and there is a possibility that the tapes are kept off site.
8. In addition to the tape backup, it is recommended that the BOA purchase and use an external hard drive. This would provide a second layer of protection against a major data loss in the event of a 'crash' of the file server's hard drive. The WinGAP backup routine was also demonstrated to provide additional protection against loss of the current data.

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

9. It is recommended that one or preferably two workstations be set up for public access. This would eliminate many of the questions addressed to the staff in the front office concerning property information. A printer could be shared by the two computers which would offer additional assistance to the public.
10. Two new laser jet printers would provide for a printing station in each section of the office. With convenient access to printed documents, traffic to and from the current network printer would be reduced which would create a more efficient office operation.
11. The file server should have a UPS unit installed. Using the UPS as a backup power source for the file server would prevent data loss and possible file corruption if the primary power were to fail.

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Appeals

Any taxpayer may appeal from an assessment by the BOA to the Board of Equalization regarding matters of taxability, uniformity of assessment, denial of exemption and value. The determinations of the BOA on questions of factual characteristics of the property under appeal shall be considered correct; however the BOA shall have the burden of proving their opinion of value and the validity of their proposed assessment by a preponderance of evidence.

1. The Hart BOE must honor the Taxpayer Bill of Rights and place the burden of proof upon the BOA.
2. The language on the BOE appointment letter serves to intimidate the property owner by seemingly requiring documentation and presentation of evidence and proof.
3. The BOA must allow the chief appraiser and appraisal staff to produce valuations and defend the assessments to the Board of Equalization.

**SPECIAL INVESTIGATION
OF HART COUNTY BOARD OF ASSESSORS**

EXHIBITS

1. Letter from Governor Sonny Perdue
2. Letter from Revenue Commissioner Bart Graham
3. 2006 Hart County Budget Worksheet
4. Letters of Appeal of Assessment by Board of Assessors members:
 - a) William Fogerty
 - b) Roy Segars
 - c) Donald Burdick
5. Letter from Assessor William Fogerty to Hart County Board of Commissioners
6. Letter from taxpayer Arnold Gurley to William Fogerty
7. Tax Map showing non-adjacent combined parcels
8. FAA Aircraft registration list for Hart County
9. Questionable Homestead Exemption listing
10. Portion of Exempt Digest showing property coded exempt erroneously
11. Board of Equalization notice of hearing letter to taxpayers
12. Board of Equalization Tax Appeal Decision Letter



EXHIBIT 1

STATE OF GEORGIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
ATLANTA 30334-0900

Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR

January 29, 2007

Mr. Bart L. Graham, Commissioner
Georgia Department of Revenue
1800 Century Boulevard, Suite 15300
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

RE: Request for audit of the Hart County Board of Tax Assessors

Dear Mr. Graham:

Please accept this letter in response to your request of December 12, 2006, that I call for an audit of the Hart County Board of Tax Assessors ("the Board"). I understand that you have been working with the local tax officials in Hart County and have already conducted a performance audit that uncovered several problems with the Board's appraisal practices, techniques and compliance with state law. Furthermore, I understand that your office continues to receive a high volume of complaints from the citizens of Hart County regarding the Board's actions and that the findings of the performance review do not appear to have initiated any significant response by the Board.

In an effort to provide the citizens of Hart County with the best information possible in order to help address the alleged problems with the Board, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 48-5-295.1, I hereby direct the Georgia Department of Revenue to perform an audit of the Hart County Board of Tax Assessors.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature of Sonny Perdue in black ink.
Sonny Perdue
Governor

SP:jt

cc: Mr. Russell Britt, Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison



Bart L. Graham
Commissioner

State of Georgia
Department of Revenue

Suite 15300
1800 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, Georgia 30345
(404) 417-2100

February 7, 2007

Mr. R. C. Oglesby, Chairman
Hart County Board of Commissioners
Post Office Box 279
Hartwell, Georgia 30643

Dear Mr. Oglesby:

Enclosed please find a copy of Governor Perdue's letter directing the Department to perform an audit of the Hart County Board of Tax Assessors as a result of numerous taxpayer concerns and alleged problems with that Board.

The Department has assigned an audit team consisting of Local Government Services Division staff that intends to begin that audit on Monday, March 5, 2007. The audit team would like to meet with you and other members of your board that afternoon to discuss the procedures and duration of the audit. In the near future, Mr. Tracy Thomas will be in contact with you to arrange for the meeting time and provide your board and the board of tax assessors with a list of documents that need to be made available for review during the audit.

If this time frame is not convenient for you, please let me know as soon as possible so that other arrangements can be made. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Bart L. Graham

BLG:mb

Enclosure

cc: Governor Sonny Perdue
Sha Hester, Director, Local Government Services Division
Tracy Thomas, Local Government Services Division
William K. Fogerty, Board of Tax Assessors

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

EXHIBIT 3

BUDGET WORKSHEET FISCAL YEAR		2006												
HART COUNTY GENERAL FUND														
EXPENSE SUMMARY														
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Month			Budget	Dept	Admin	Comm	% Change	% of Budget		
				Actual	Projection	Budget							Request	Approve
				2003	2004	2005							2006	2006
General Government:	10000	150,535	109,043	252,934	72,391	122,036	162,248	171,826	171,826	171,826	6%	1.8%		
Executive (Board of Comm) 100.13000	13000	217,336	251,734	293,432	177,394	296,907	316,904	331,966	331,966	331,966	5%	3.4%		
Elections 100.14000	14000	25,816	30,168	18,739	14,493	31,425	31,425	38,841	31,011	31,916	2%	0.3%		
Board of Registers 100.14100	14100	32,351	37,811	32,749	16,388	36,805	36,842	64,516	38,538	39,338	7%	0.4%		
Law	15300	88,499	73,893	73,151	39,173	67,154	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	0%	0.7%		
Tax Commissioner	15450	222,132	217,854	210,945	138,806	238,805	231,413	239,154	238,566	238,566	2%	2.4%		
Tax Assessors	15500	231,817	240,647	259,646	126,901	240,519	264,229	811,577	384,182	281,382	6%	2.9%		
Risk Management	15550	285,713	278,152	446,269	324,991	458,061	342,894	314,000	314,000	314,000	-9%	3.2%		
Internal Audit	15600	57,113	47,704	33,628	33,533	34,000	32,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	25%	0.4%		
Gen Gov Bldgs	15650	105,675	111,178	168,930	74,489	134,138	144,400	111,800	111,800	111,300	-23%	1.1%		
General Administration fees	15650	21,983	21,460	3,485	3,485	4,000	4,000	4,450	4,450	3,500	-13%	0.0%		
Superior Court	21500	89,128	107,248	115,740	66,895	111,926	120,283	117,757	115,975	115,975	-4%	1.2%		
Clerk of Superior Court	21800	221,674	225,575	279,378	157,228	268,961	272,057	297,190	281,840	290,740	7%	3.0%		
District Attorney	22000	8,588	6,503	6,459	5,269	7,661	8,300	6,800	6,800	6,800	8%	0.1%		
Magistrate Court	24000	131,643	133,436	148,898	83,801	142,828	149,847	177,236	177,236	177,236	18%	1.8%		
Probate Court	24500	147,557	153,857	186,308	110,275	184,396	202,531	212,813	212,133	212,683	9%	2.2%		
Juvenile Court	28000	83,157	62,893	57,791	37,549	64,920	64,285	65,737	65,737	65,737	2%	0.7%		
Grand Jury	27000	48,758	52,464	37,896	37,053	63,519	52,021	43,219	43,219	38,219	-27%	0.4%		
Public Defender	28000	51,974	51,914	50,190	36,375	48,500	48,500	48,250	48,250	48,250	-1%	0.5%		
Board of Equalization	28160	9,723	3,862	2,462	4,571	7,788	18,157	16,179	11,677	8,609	-45%	0.1%		
Misdemeanor Probation	28110	6,050	4,538	4,538	4,538	6,050	6,050	6,050	6,050	6,050	0%	0.1%		
Sheriff	33000	1,095,688	1,077,882	1,254,762	877,405	1,452,984	1,473,728	1,603,953	1,625,579	1,653,579	9%	15.9%		
Jail operations	33260	725,984	753,980	777,429	512,596	877,640	776,791	948,297	892,282	919,762	18%	9.4%		
Adult Corrections	34200	10,278	16,536	17,831	15,953	27,348	18,000	84,000	27,000	27,000	90%	0.3%		
EMS	38000	858,911	836,838	933,437	796,423	1,298,003	1,398,018	1,489,126	1,487,976	1,392,476	0%	14.2%		
Coroner	37000	10,872	16,461	14,907	7,737	14,747	14,293	19,866	18,368	18,868	31%	0.4%		
Animal Shelter	39100	30,000	25,000	25,000	15,000	30,000	30,000	38,500	35,000	35,000	17%	0.4%		
Emergency Management	38200	18,290	16,890	81,532	17,351	31,159	30,513	21,743	21,593	21,593	-28%	0.2%		
Public Works	41000	117,743	28,343	23,490	16,977	28,103	29,699	0	0	0	-100%	0.0%		
Highways & Streets	42000	712,171	804,988	788,016	624,848	1,068,379	1,117,881	1,305,348	1,305,348	1,229,335	10%	12.8%		
Water Authority	44100	185,782	153,192	48,340	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%		
Clean & Beautiful	45410	13,515	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%		
Maintenance Shop	49000	229,379	271,423	289,845	174,679	300,334	307,017	367,223	367,223	338,753	10%	3.5%		
Health Dept	51000	101,431	70,386	78,746	41,478	1,229	76,411	96,142	78,511	78,821	1%	0.8%		
Welfare/DFACS	54000	61,359	75,255	106,180	74,451	105,507	119,480	142,101	128,156	142,101	18%	1.5%		
Senior Center	55200	84,981	85,651	91,324	50,283	85,913	91,189	92,344	92,049	91,049	0%	0.9%		
Transit Services	55400	60,495	58,328	61,999	34,898	59,399	61,497	71,248	70,016	70,916	16%	2.8%		
Recreation	61000	219,984	213,593	220,868	118,458	205,670	252,241	294,209	277,792	273,792	9%	2.8%		
HYDRA	61800	17,500	15,000	15,000	7,500	15,000	15,000	17,500	15,000	17,500	17%	0.2%		
Library Administration	63100	93,920	67,500	127,504	73,845	93,600	153,600	703,600	693,600	693,600	352%	7.1%		
Agricultural Resources	71300	77,882	74,981	72,090	48,639	78,439	79,935	83,014	78,428	79,428	-1%	0.8%		
Forest Resources	71400	2,340	2,340	2,340	2,340	2,340	2,340	2,340	2,340	2,340	0%	0.0%		
Economic Dev & Assistance	75000	194,340	71,921	63,927	38,025	87,443	142,373	268,039	170,239	165,239	16%	1.7%		
Airport Authority	75030	12,850	12,440	5,438	5,438	7,250	7,250	14,475	13,945	13,945	0%	0.1%		
Community Action Programs	76300	5,500	1,125	4,625	3,475	4,600	4,600	4,500	4,500	100	-98%	0.0%		
Literacy Center	78400	25,000	20,000	20,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25%	0.3%		
to match audit		73,242		24,048										
TOTAL		7,201,839	7,202,005	7,801,238	5,138,984	8,467,525	8,794,235	10,857,727	10,862,296	9,789,346	11.32%	100%		
Revenues less Expenses Admin							\$ (1,252,143)							
Revenues less Expenses Fiscal							\$ (614,268)							
Southern Item CPI				188.1	193.6 % change		4.14% (first half)							

General Fund FY07 final xls / Expense Summary

10/6/2006

Rec. 9/7/05 by hand
Missy Carter

EXHIBIT 4-A

9/7/05

Hart County Board of Assessors
Hartwell, GA

Appeal of Assessment on property C64C -015

This letter is notice of our intent to appeal the assessment of the property noted above - both the land value and the building value.

Please provide in writing those sales used to determine the land value and a written description of the neighborhood or section in which this property is located.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

William Fogerty

William and Ann Fogerty
794 Reed Creek Trail
Hartwell, GA 30643

H/O Rec Scott Brown

9-15-05

To: Board of Assessors

EXHIBIT 4-B

From: Roy Segars, Jr. C64E-019

I would like to appeal my land value for
the 2005 assessment for the property located at -
748 Reed Creek Point, Hartwell, GA 30643

Roy Segars, Jr.

H/D REC 9-21-05 Scott Brown

EXHIBIT 4-C

"APPEAL"

Date: 20 September 2005

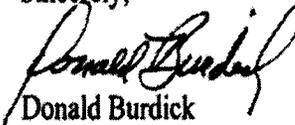
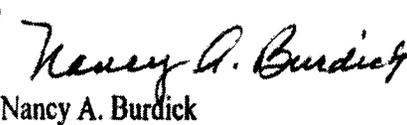
Hart County Board of Assessors
Post Office Box 426
Hartwell, Georgia 30643

Reference: 2005 Property Assessment Value
Hart County, Georgia
Reference Map/Parcel # C38-C-010 (Rocky Point S/D)

This is to acknowledge receipt of my assessment notice on the above referenced property.

Please be advised that the undersigned hereby appeals the Land Value as determined by the Board of Assessors. We request that you identify and send to us the specific comparable properties and sales data as well as Land Unit Values and any Condition Factors upon which our value was determined. Please note that our property is only 0.236 Acre and our value increased 2.4 times from the previous year's value - from \$71,500 to \$170,500! Thank you.

Sincerely,

 
Donald Burdick Nancy A. Burdick

166 Hart State Park Road
Hartwell, GA 30643

Hart County Board of Assessors
Hart County Courthouse
165 W. Franklin Street - Room 1
P O Box 426
Hartwell, Georgia 30643

706 376-3997

January 3, 2006

Mr. R. C. Oglesby
Chairman
Hart County Board of Commissioners
Hartwell, GA

Dear Mr. Oglesby:

The Board of Assessors appreciated your attending a portion of our meeting today. Dan Reyen attended during the "Commissioners' topics" period.

The BOA proposed to you and agreed to attend a jointly called and chaired meeting of both boards for the purpose of establishing a positive working relationship for 2006. Time proposed was 7PM Thursday January 5.

Even though the BOC immediately changed the time to 5 PM, the BOA will accomodate that change as long as the appearance of jointness is projected.

It is important, therefore, that both boards be treated equally:

- seating should be level; no BOC members on raised platform
- perhaps a table on a main floor
- site might be basement of litera-cy center
- procedures should be establishe- before the meeting and agreed upon by both chairman
- speakers should be limited
- a moderator should be utilized to insure each board has equal access

I will be happy to meet with you as soon as possible to establish these procedures.

If we do not have prior agreement on how the meeting is to be managed, it is probably best to postpone it until we can do so. It is certainly in the best interest of both boards to insure that the meeting begin on a positive note - if it can not, there is no purpose to the meeting.

Please contact me as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

William K. Fogerty

Home of Beautiful Lake Hartwell.

William K. Fogerty
Acting Chairman, Board of Assessors

copy: J. Caime
Hartwell Sun
BOA

March 8, 2007

EXHIBIT 6

Mr. Bill Fogerty
Hart County Board of Assessors
P.O. Box 426
165 West Franklin Street
Hartwell, GA 30643

Dear Mr. Fogerty:

I'm following up to try and determine when the \$20,000 reduction granted by the appeal I made in 2005 will be properly recorded for the Tax Collectors office on the Property Record Card (enclosed). I was promised it would be corrected soon on 10-6-06 by LeAnn Howell. I am receiving threatening letters form Mr. Pierce for "underpaying" my taxes, **even though his office told me to deduct the amount I was refunded last year!** See attachment A and B.

Attachment C shows the amount of \$142.66 refunded to me in early 2006. I assumed the Property Record was updated at that time and the update triggered that refund.

I know both you and Mr. Pierce "have your hands full" of problems, but I strongly resent getting threatening letters because I followed instructions and because someone else or some group has made a mistake. I have an excellent credit rating and have always paid my bills and taxes on time.

I would appreciate a response, although I'm sure I won't receive one.

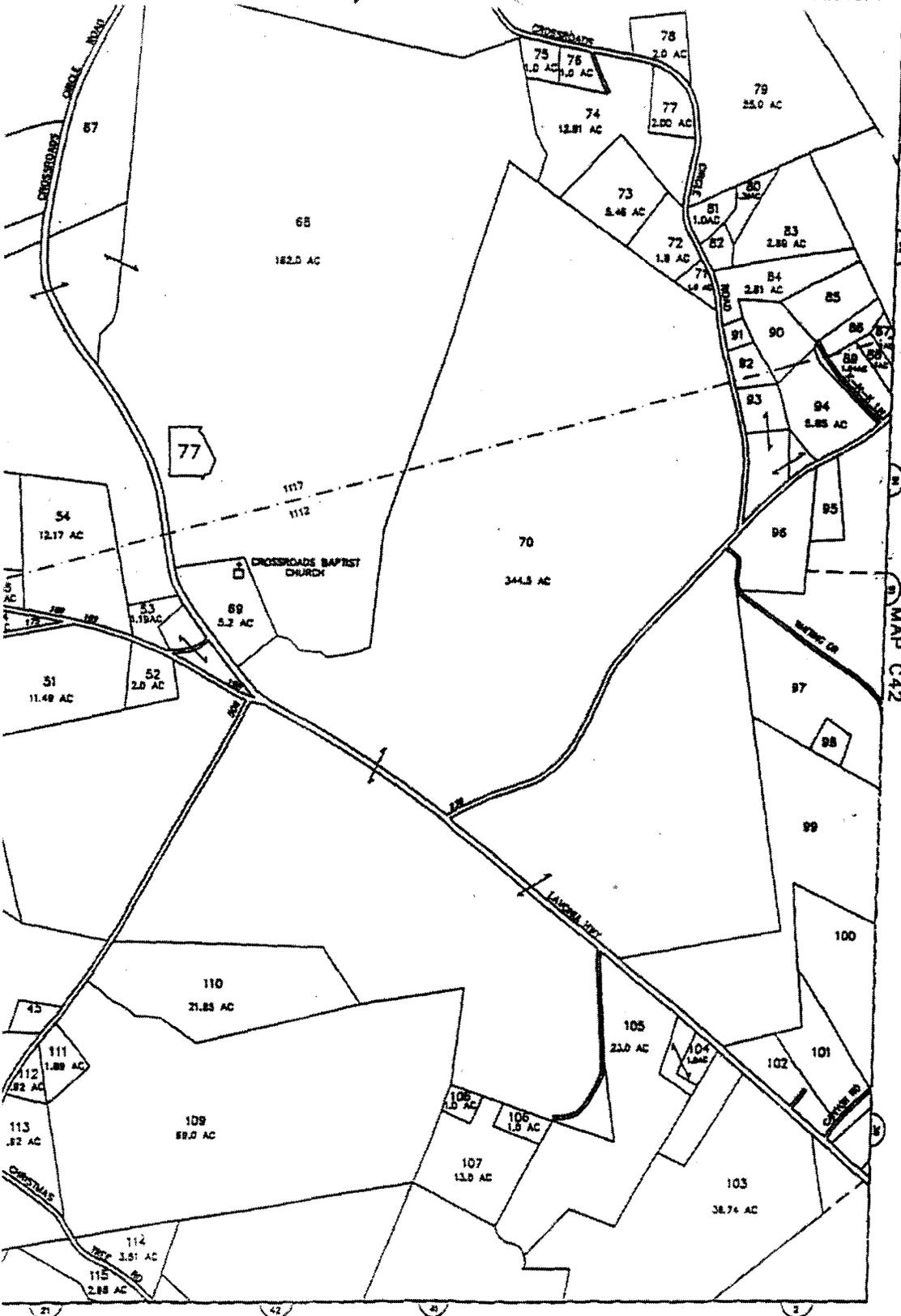
Sincerely,



Arnold Gurley
180 Woodland Manor
Royston, GA 30662
Tele: 706-245-6521

COPY: Mr. Burl Pierce
Mr. Joey Dorsey

EXHIBIT 7



PONI
Company
2000 Peachtree Parkway
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

SCALE IN FEET
DATE: AUGUST 09

HART COUNTY
GEORGIA

MAP C42

DISCLAIMER
THIS MAP WAS COMPILED BY PONI & COMPANY, INC. FOR HART COUNTY, THE COUNTY AND/OR CITY OF HART COUNTY, GEORGIA. PONI & COMPANY, INC. ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY OF THIS INFORMATION.



TAX MAP
C30

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

FAA Registry
State and County Inquiry Results

State Entered : GEORGIA
County Entered : HART
Number of Records: 24 (Page 1 of 1)

EXHIBIT 8

N-Number	Serial Number	Name Address	Manufacture Name Manufacture Year	Model	Certificate Issue Date	Aircraft Weight
<u>1097K</u>	3824	WERNER GLENN M 2834 ROYSTON HWY HARTWELL GA 30643-4602	LUSCOMBE 1946	8A	12/15/1986	Up to 12,499
<u>1885</u>	S-139	FLOYD JERRY F PO BOX 625 HARTWELL GA 30643	SMITH-TRAMMELL 1969	TERMITE	07/09/1983	Up to 12,499
<u>2425F</u>	18051625	RAMSDELL MYRON J 300 PUNKIN BEND RD HARTWELL GA 30643-8130	CESSNA 1965	180H	02/02/2007	Up to 12,499
<u>288KM</u>	BB-1508	NOMAD AVIATION LLC 96 PIRATES CV HARTWELL GA 30643-3072	BEECH 1995	B200	10/18/2006	12,500 to 19,999
<u>311NM</u>	NAV-4-1196	BROWN ASA V JR 718 HARTWELL ST ROYSTON GA 30662-2414	NAVION 1948	NAVION A	09/23/2003	Up to 12,499
<u>3244Z</u>	22-7191	GINN ROBERT THERON 545 DEERFIELD LN ROYSTON GA 30662-5477	PIPER 1959	PA-22-150	04/16/1990	Up to 12,499
<u>3562Y</u>	18254462	SOUTHERN PRECISION COMPONENTS INC 2079 RIDGE RD HARTWELL GA 30643-4112	CESSNA 1962	182F	06/11/1996	Up to 12,499
		RAM CONSULTING				

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

EXHIBIT 9

lastname	address1	address2	address3	city	state	zip	parcel_no	home
AARON THOMAS D & GWENDOLYN H		1090 NONA DRIVE		ATHENS	GA	30608	C77G 004	L1
ABLES JOHN BENJAMIN JR & BLANC	HE COKER (LIFE EST)	C/O DIANNE A. RAND	4933 MEADOW LANE	MARIETTA	GA	30068	C27A 044	L4
ALLISON DIANNE AYERS		509 TAUBER WAY		MARIETTA	GA	30064	I56P 017	L1
CIT GROUP/CONSUMER FINANCE INC		715 S METROPOLITAN AVENUE		OKLAHOMA CITY	OK	73108	C42 020	S1
GALLAGHER JUANITA & MYERS HARLEY		925 BEVERLY HARBORS DR		LEESBURG	FL	34748	I56H 011	S1
BAILEY GORDON W & PHYLLIS A		1024 POWDER BAG CREEK RD		HARTWELL	GA	30463	C81C 025	L1
HANNER DANIEL L & JOANNE S		1285 WYCKFIELD PLACE		LAWRENCEVILLE	GA	30044	C85D 012	L4
BLADES BERT J		12250 FAIRGLEN ROAD		LEBANON	MO	6553678	C14 058	S1
FOWLER KATHY		494 HARTWELL ST		ROYSTON	GA	30062	C08B 073	S1
SEMLEY FELIX JOHN & MARY ANN		614B HIDDEN LAKE RD		DAHLONEGA	GA	30533	C80C 081	S1
HETRICK JANE ANN & DANIEL FULLER		509 CANON VIEW DRIVE		GOLDEN	CO	80403	C55B 099	S1
MCLANE MATTIE RUTH	C/O BONNIE M MORRIS	159 FAIRVIEW CHURCH ROAD		FORSAYTH	GA	31029	C54 038	S4
ROWE TERRY & JILL D		1525 POND FORK CHURCH ROAD		TALMO	GA	30575	C78E 044	S1
BOYMAN OLA	C/O DAISEY M ROBIK	1526 W 66TH AVE		PHILA	PA	19126	I57L 023	S4
COMMUNITY BANK AND TRUST FBO FLETCHER		855 IRVIN STREET		CORNELIA	GA	30531	C26D 008	S1
BURTON CHRISTEEN ET AL	C/O	451 SWEETBRIAR WAY		EASLEY	SC	29640	C83A 093	S1
CACCHIOLI L G	C/O LINDA C FOUNTAIN	4513 BRIERS COURT		STONE MOUNTAIN	GA	30083	I70B 003	L1
ROSS KIM F & CAMERON		1652 TRYON ROAD		ATLANTA	GA	30319	C39A 121	S1
CANTRELL OLIN GREGORY &	PATRICIA GAIL	P O BOX 28		MARION	AR	72364	C45 119	S1
PEEPLES TALMADGE EDWARD JR &	SUSAN	PO BOX 35		FRANKLIN SPRINGS	GA	30839	C09 084	S1
LOGGINS LARRY W & MELINDA E		P O BOX 697		NICHOLSON	GA	30565	C81A 072	S1
SMITH CRAIG		2304 OAK FALLS LN		BUFORD	GA	3051919	I56L 070	S1
CLEVELAND LEE EDWARD		5177 EDGEWOOD DRIVE		NORCROSS	GA	30071	C56A 155	S1
COLEY CLAYTON C & LINDA		518 PANORAMA DR		LAVONIA	GA	30552	C38C 109	L1
ALFANO THOMAS A & CHRISTINE WALL		313 EAST LEE ST		BROOKLET	GA	30415	I69E 020	S1
ROSE JILL S		151 LAKE FOREST DRIVE		ATHENS	GA	30607	C78A 030	S1
LANE CHARLES WADE		893 GREENWOOD RD		HARTWELL	GA	00000	C54 011	S1
CHERRY BRYAN E		377 CANEY HEAD RD		ROOPVILLE	GA	30170	I56J 005	S1
MAXEY JOHNNY A & SUSAN S		P O BOX 692		WATKINSVILLE	GA	30677	C88C 010	L1
PENNINGTON DAVID E & MAHMOODI KARIN L		11940 ALPHARETTA HWY	SUITE 136	ALPHARETTA	GA	30004	C26E 285	S1
ATKINSON DONALD R & EDITH J		3340 MILLWATER CROSSING		DACULA	GA	30019	C78E 004	S1
FLOWERS JUNE P		19854 #2 HIGH BLUFF ROAD		HELOTES	TX	78023	I57G 132	L4
FORD CHARLES E JR		9 HICKORY HOLLOW CT		GREENVILLE	SC	2960758	C80C 071	S1
GAINES BESSIE R	C/O HUGH STOWERS	322 ROSS RD		LIBERTY	SC	29657	I69M 123	S4
GRIFFIN BURCH THOMAS SR ET AL	C/O BURTC H GRIFFIN	504 EAST MINISTER DRIVE		KANNAPOLIS	NC	28083	I57D 270	L1
BLACK RICHARD A & AIME R		303 WILLOW OAK CT		SENECA	SC	29672	C77E 043	S1
HARPER JUANITA THORNTON		4483 JOHN WESLEY DR		DECATUR GA	GA	30035	I57D 256	S4
HARRIS LARRY G		545 MCGEE RD		CANON	GA	30522	C02 006	S1
MORRIS MATTIE RUTH		C/O CHARLES EDWIN PURDY	2903 E. NORTH AVE.	ANDERSON	SC	29625	I57H 076	L4
HERNDON RAY GLADYS MRS		C/O R. OLIN HERNDON	12215 MONTFORD RD.	ORANGE	VA	2296020	C57C 002	L4
TWINER MICHAEL S & MARY A		595 BITTERSWEET TRAIL		ATLANTA	GA	30350	C89H 019	L1
THOMPSON JAMES DAVID	THOMPSON SANDRA	110 ROSE WOOD LANE		ELBERTON	GA	30853	C83 040 P 2	S1
BALDWIN GENERAL STORE INC		225 CHASE SUMMIT		CORNELIA	GA	30531	C80D 016	S1
LUNDY PATTY P		1836 ROCKRIDGE PLACE		ATLANTA	GA	30304	C78D 002	L1
BLACKMAN WALTER W III &		P O BOX 728		HOSCHTON	GA	30548	C87F 133	S1
GOOD HART INVESTMENTS LLC		P O BOX 25		HOSCHTON	GA	30548	I57D 240	S1

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

EXHIBIT 10

2006 HART COUNTY		TAX DIGEST - REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY					EXEMPT PROPERTY DIGEST	PAGE 24		
Account No Bill Number Bill Amount	Owner Name & Mailing Address Property Location or Description Map Number	PROPERTY CLASSES, VALUES, & ACRES					Total Value 40% Fair Mkt	TAX DETAIL		
		C/S	Fair Market	40% Value	Acres	Add'l Exempt		Tax Type	Exemptions	Net Taxable
14975R	CALINGS CHAPEL CHURCH ** 00000 .600 GND 1114 C94 008	E2	14,630	5,852	.60		DISTRICT 01 5,852 14,630			
3937R	GEORGIA FORESTRY COMM. EXEMPT 00000 GND 1116 .14AC C31 101	E1	1,120	448	.14		DISTRICT 01 448 1,120			
17190R	GIBBS TIFFANY S 52 PATTERSON ST HAWKINSVILLE GA 30643 LOT 27 PB2P-146 1691 097	E2	2,900	1,160	.29		DISTRICT 02 1,160 2,900			
697R	CINN STEVE ESTATE PAYS TAX IN MADISON CO 00000 PAYS TAX IN MADISON CO GND 111 C09 015	E9	258,340	103,336	70.68		DISTRICT 01 103,336 258,340			
4314R	GOLDMINE CHURCH OF GOD 6970 ROYSTON HWY CANON GA 30520 CHURCH PROP C34 048	E2 E2 E2	53,330 264,280 589,960	21,332 105,712 235,984	7.11		DISTRICT 01 363,028 907,570			
4315R	GOLDMINE CHURCH OF GOD 6970 ROYSTON HWY CANON GA 30520 GND 1113 C34 049	E2 E2	7,500 553,660	3,000 221,464	1.00		DISTRICT 01 224,464 561,160			
1959R	COLDMINE FIRE DEPARTMENT 00000 GND 1113 COLDMINE FIRE DE .96. C20 081	E1 E1 E1	8,000 3,533 108,800	3,200 1,413 43,520			DISTRICT 01 48,133 120,333			

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

Hart County, Georgia
Post Office Box 236
Hartwell, Georgia 30643
706-856-5350

EXHIBIT 11

December 29, 2006

Ricky Dean Brown
250 Reed Creek School Rd
Hartwell, GA 30643

Dear Mr. Brown,

Reference: 2005 Property Tax
Hart County, Georgia
Map Number C77C-113
Property Description : PB 21-821 & Well GMD 1115

An appeal hearing has been set for you by the Hart County Board of Equalization at the date, time and location listed below:

Date: 1/23/2007

Time: 1:30 PM

Location: Administration Building

800 Chandler St Hartwell, GA

During your tax hearing, **it will be your responsibility to convince the Board of Equalization members that your property value has been set too high by the County Board of Tax Assessors. It is important for you to state the value of your property. It is important for you to provide support for your opinion of the value of your property to the Board when you have your hearing.** Bring with you any documents in your possession pertaining to your property value and any photos of your property you may wish to present at the time of the hearing. **Remember, it is not sufficient just to state that you feel the property value has been set too high, you must present supporting evidence.**

If you are unable to attend the hearing on the date and time scheduled, you must notify the BOE Secretary by phone at 706-856-5350 or by mail prior to the date of the hearing. If you are unable to appear in person and or desire to have someone represent you at the hearing, you must submit the name of the person in writing prior to the date of your scheduled hearing.

Sincerely,



Thomas A Peebles
Chairman

cc: Hart County Board of Tax Assessors

EXHIBIT 2

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

Hart County
Post Office Box 236
Hartwell, Georgia 30643
706-856-5350

January 29, 2007

Roy JR & Katherine Snow Segars
748 Reed Creek Point
Hartwell, GA 30643

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Segars:

Reference: 2005 Property Tax
Hart County, Georgia
Map # C64E-019

The appeal on the above referenced property has been reviewed by the Board of Equalization.

The members of the board, having heard all the evidence and reviewed all information submitted regarding your appeal, has made the following decision on the above referenced property.

Issue: 1. Value of dwelling.
2. Value of land.

Decision: 1. Change EYB from 1999 to 1997.
2. Reduce Land Unit Price to \$240,000.00.

Reason: 1. Evidence provided. 2. Evidence provided.

If you do not agree with this decision, you have 30 days from receipt of this letter to file an appeal with the Superior Court.

Respectfully,



Thomas A Peebles
Chairman

Enclosure
cc: Hart County Board of Tax Assessor

Special Investigation of the Hart County Board of Assessors

6/5/2007

The DOR agents from the Local Government Services Division assigned to the Hart County Investigation include;

Gregg Reese, Business Analyst Supervisor

Ellen Mills, Manager I

Tracy Thomas, Administrative Specialist 2

Richard Vinke, Property Tax Appraiser

Fieldwork and research assistance was performed by other DOR appraisers

Al Deen, Property Tax Appraiser

Joseph Wright, Property Tax Appraiser

Kenny Colson, Property Tax Appraiser