

# **STEUBEN COUNTY**

## **New York**



### **Centralized Property Tax Administration Program Feasibility Study**

For a Centralized Tax Collection Database

February 2009

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Intent and scope of study**

The NYS Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) has identified the following objectives relative to improving the performance of the real property tax system in New York State. These objectives apply both to assessment and tax collection and effectively define the overall scope of this study.

- Equity – every property across the state is treated similarly
- Transparency – the system is understandable to the taxpayer
- Quality – professional, consistent level of service
- Efficiency – lowest system cost for a given level of service

The County's primary objective is to work collaboratively with all taxing jurisdictions to identify strategies that would enhance both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the current countywide tax collection process.

A comprehensive survey (See Appendix – Tax Collection Questionnaire) was distributed to the tax collector and chief executive official in each jurisdiction. Responses were received from 69 (64%) of the taxing jurisdictions. Additionally most of the non-responders were contacted by phone to ascertain basic information about their current tax collection system. The survey was broken down into the following major components:

- Basic Information
- Computerization – Hardware / Software
- Existing System
- Local Tax Collection Cost
- Installment Payments
- Countywide Web-based Services
- Other Opportunities for Improvement

### **Summary of Existing System**

Countywide the 2007 assessment roll comprised a total of 55,444 parcels. There are seventy (70) taxing jurisdictions in Steuben County (See Appendix – Parcel Count and Tax Collection Offices).

The local collectors of current taxes utilize multiple types of databases including Williamson Law, Business Automation Services (BAS), Allen Tunnell, Harris Computer, Prosoft-NY, KVS, GST BOCES, and spreadsheets such as Excel. Two taxing jurisdictions contract with JP Morgan Chase for tax processing. There are 8 (towns and villages) taxing jurisdictions that are not computerized for tax collection.

### **Summary of Proposed Centralized System**

A centralized tax collections database would provide greater effectiveness and efficiency to the County, the taxing jurisdictions, the tax collectors, and ultimately the taxpayer. Currently the County's database includes only delinquent tax information for city, village, and school district taxes. Basic paid information regarding town and county tax bills is periodically provided to the County by the local collectors. Taxpayers and other researchers such as lawyers and abstractors desiring tax information need to call each taxing jurisdictions to obtain tax information.

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is proposed to develop a countywide tax collection database that includes current and historical data relative to parcel information, tax bills, and payment status. This database will be

managed at the County level with initial taxing jurisdiction access. Eventually this database will be web based with taxpayer inquiry capability.

### **Summary of Proposed Implementation Plan**

Steuben County has an exceptional and extremely capable Information Technology Staff that has expertise in tax bill processing and the delinquent tax system. Internal resources will be utilized to develop and implement the countywide database relative to tax collection and also to implement other enhancements to the tax collections system as determined feasible and cost effective. The County may request presentations from commercial contractors to determine if any can meet the County’s requirements. If so, an RFP may be issued for the specific enhancement, but this is unlikely since there are many advantages to customized software.

This will be a phased-in process. The projected time table follows:

2009 – Communicate and develop buy-in with the taxing jurisdictions. Steuben County Information Technology will develop the programs necessary to implement the centralized county-wide database.

2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	Implement Town & County
2011	2nd Quarter	Implement Villages
2011	2nd Quarter	Implement Cities
2011	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Implement School districts

### **Other Enhancement Options**

#### **County Supported - Centralized Uniform Collection Software**

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the County should develop or acquire and support a universal software platform that can be utilized by all taxing jurisdictions. It is critical that each location’s software should be able to easily communicate and transfer data to the County’s database. Utilization of this software should be optional, but the files transmitted to the County will be required to be in a format that can easily be transferred without any revisions by the County. The established file format should be compatible with the major vendor provided software such as BAS, Williamson Law, GST BOCES, and Allen Tunnel or these vendors should reprogram to provide files in the requested format. Jurisdictions that are currently processing tax collections manually and wish to continue to do so will be required to reimburse the County for the labor and any other costs required to input collection data into the County’s system.

#### **Payment Option Enhancements**

RECOMMENDATION: Steuben County awarded an RFP to M&T Bank in January 2009 for Merchant Card Services providing the capability to accept credit card payments and also i-check payment for real property taxes via the internet, over the phone, and in person. It is the County’s intent to expand this service to include all interested tax collection sites. The County intends to charge the user (taxpayer) of this service a convenience fee.

The County prints the tax bills for most of the taxing jurisdictions: all of the towns, both cities, all of the villages except one, and approximately 50% of the school districts. Bar coding bills would be an enhancement to the collection process facilitating acceptance of tax payments by banks and lock box providers. The feasibility of implementing bar coding on the tax bills that are produced by the County should be investigated. The County should study the cost/benefit of implementing lock box services for delinquent taxes collected at the County level. If warranted the County could issue an RFP that would encompass all jurisdictions interested in this service. A centralized RFP could result in substantial savings countywide.

## **Centralized Tax Collection**

RECOMMENDATION: This is not a high priority and should not be considered by the County at this time.

## **Installment payments options**

RECOMMENDATION: It seems that the benefit of implementing an installment payment option for current town and county taxes would not be substantial enough to justify the cost especially with the apparent opposition by the majority of towns that responded to the survey. Both the County and local tax collection jurisdictions would have a financial impact to implement installment payments of current taxes. Local collectors are concerned about reduced town fees and timely receipt of tax dollars. Installment options for current taxes may actually reduce the timely collection of taxes, depending on the month of subsequent installments. The County may be required to pay towns the balance of their warrant without sufficient collections to meet this outlay potentially resulting in the need to borrow. In 2008 only 9.82% of tax payers failed to pay their town and county taxes to the local tax collector. The County's installment payment option provides an opportunity for delinquent tax payers to spread their taxes over 24 payments and has proven to be an effective tool to assist taxpayers in their effort to become current with taxes.

*Carol S Whitehead,*  
Steuben County Treasurer

## Existing System

# COLLECTION OF CURRENT TAXES

## TOWN AND COUNTY TAX COLLECTIONS

Survey results: Representatives from 71.9% of Towns responded. The remaining towns were contacted by phone to determine the features of their current collection process.

All tax bills are printed by Steuben County.

There are 70 tax collection officers accepting town and county, city, village, and school taxes (See Appendix-Parcel Count and Tax Collection Offices). Twenty-one or 65.6% of the elected Town Clerks also serve as the Town Tax Collector.

Town and County taxes are levied in January. There are 32 local Town Tax Collectors that collect Town and County taxes and two cities that collect the County taxes during the local collection period which typically is from January thru March (See Appendix – Tax Calendar). Unpaid taxes are turned over to the County in April. Tax collections are applied to town warrants first. The County pays the warrant balance to towns in April to those towns that did not collect their total warrant. Basic paid information regarding town and county tax bills is periodically provided to the County by the local collectors.

### 1) How many parcels are there?

55,444 countywide parcel count on the 2007 assessment role (See appendix – Parcel Count and Tax Collection Offices)

### 2) What type of database is used?

The local tax collectors utilize multiple types of databases including Williamson Law, Business Automation Services (BAS), Allen Tunnell, and spreadsheets such as Excel. There are 5 towns (Canisteo, Cameron, Pulteney, Tuscarora, and West Union) that are not computerized for tax collection. Fremont also submits their data manually to the County, but reports to have BAS software.

### 3) Where is the data presently physically housed?

Tax collection data for taxes paid locally is physically housed at each municipality. Tax collection data for taxes returned to the County for collection is physically housed in the County's database.

### 4) What type of software is use for access, analysis, and reporting?

JP Morgan Chase	1	3%
Williamson Law	20	59%
BAS	5	15%
Allen Tunnell	1	3%
Manual	5	15%
Excel / Other	2	5%

### 5) Who inputs and maintains the data?

The local tax collector inputs and maintains data in their local database. The County Treasurer's Office also maintains basic data on parcels paid at the local level and more detailed data on payment of delinquent taxes paid directly to the County.

**6) What methods of payment are accepted?**

Other than the usual methods of payments of cash, check, and money order: it appears that no town collector has the capability to accept credit card payments or payments via the internet. Lockbox services provided through JP Morgan Chase are utilized by the Town of Erwin and the City of Corning.

**7) Is bar coding or scanning options used?**

No

**8) Who is responsible for system maintenance?**

Typically the software provider in conjunction with the tax collector provides system maintenance.

**9) What backup and security procedures are in place?**

This is the responsibility of the local tax collector with assistance and support from the software provider.

**10) Is there the ability presently to view individual parcel tax bills and status?**

The ability to view individual parcels currently exists only for the personnel of the taxing jurisdictions that utilizes the software / database.

**11) Who has access to the database?**

Typically just the local tax collectors have access to the local databases.

**12) Is information accessed via the Internet?**

Two of the towns that responded (Lindley and Urbana) indicated that they have the capability to provide taxpayer access to bills and status via the internet.

**13) Do taxing jurisdictions have high speed internet access?**

Some towns do not have access to high speed internet service.

**14) Who is responsible for ensuring data integrity?**

Data integrity is the responsibility of each individual taxing jurisdiction with support from their software vendor.

**15) How is user support provided?**

Support is primarily provided by the software vendor for those municipalities that utilized a canned application and typically the support is provided via phone.

**16) What is the current cost in terms of software licensing, hardware requirements, data entry and database maintenance for the tax collection function?**

Individual annual town costs vary from less than \$1,000 to \$17,700. Software maintenance costs are typically less than \$1,000. Many Town Clerks also serve as Tax Collectors. The average cost of the towns that responded to the survey is approximately \$5,500.

## **VILLAGE TAX COLLECTIONS**

Survey results: Representatives from 50% of the villages responded to the survey and the balance of the villages were contacted by phone to determine the features of their current collection process.

There are 14 villages in Steuben County. Two of the villages (South Corning and Hammondsport) levy their village tax as of March 1<sup>st</sup>. The remaining villages issue tax bills as of June 1<sup>st</sup>. Unpaid-village taxes are returned to the County in November for re-levy with the town and county taxes in January (See Appendix-Tax Calendar). Steuben County Legislature passed a resolution in 1987 authorizing the County Treasurer to collect delinquent village taxes (See the Appendix for the authorizing resolution). During the interim period from November to the relevy in January, taxpayers can not pay their village taxes. The Village of Hammondsport has authorized installment payments effective with the 2009 tax bills. In 2009 Steuben County will print the tax bills for all villages except for Wayland. Wayland has an in-house program for printing bills.

### **1) How many parcels are there?**

According to the 2007 Annual Report of the Steuben County Real Property Tax Service the parcel count by villages is as follows:

Village of Addison	521
Village of Avoca	417
Village of Bath	1,986
Village of Savona	325
Village of Canisteo	1,015
Village of Cohocton	440
Village of Riverside	264
Village of South Corning	556
Village of Painted Post	717
Village of Almond	28
Village of Arkport	377
Village of North Hornell	391
Village of Hammondsport	419
Village of Wayland	<u>797</u>
TOTAL	8,253

### **2) What type of database is used?**

The local village tax collectors utilize multiple types of databases including Williamson Law, Business Automation Systems (BAS), Allen Tunnell, Harris Computer, Excel, and KVS. There are 3 villages (Avoca, South Corning, and Almond) that are not computerized for tax collection.

### **3) Where is the data presently physically housed?**

Tax collection data for taxes paid locally is physically housed at each municipality. Tax collection data for taxes returned to the County for collection is physically housed in the County's database.

### **4) What type of software is use for access, analysis, and reporting?**

Williamson Law	6	44%
BAS	1	7%
KVS	1	7%
Prosoft NY	1	7%
Harris Computer	1	7%

Manual	3	21%
Excel / Other	1	7%

**5) Who inputs and maintains the data?**

The local tax collector inputs and maintains data in their local database. The County maintains no payment records relative to taxes paid at the local level.

**6) What methods of payment are accepted?**

Other than the usual methods of payments of cash, check, and money order; no village has the capability to accept credit card payments or payments via the internet. Four villages do have lockbox service.

**7) Is bar coding or scanning options used?**

No

**8) Who is responsible for system maintenance?**

Typically the software provider in conjunction with the tax collector provides system maintenance.

**9) What backup and security procedures are in place?**

This is the responsibility of the local tax collector with assistance and support from the software provider.

**10) Is there the ability presently to view individual parcel tax bills and status?**

The ability to view individual parcels currently exists for the personnel of the taxing jurisdictions that utilizes the software / database. BAS has a website where tax information is accessible by the taxpayer. One village uses BAS software.

**11) Who has access to the database?**

Typically just the local tax collectors have access to the local databases for update purposes.

**12) Is information accessed via the Internet?**

BAS has a website where tax information is accessible by the taxpayer. One village uses BAS software.

**13) Do taxing jurisdictions have high speed internet access?**

86% of villages indicated that they do have high speed internet access.

**14) Who is responsible for ensuring data integrity?**

Data integrity is the responsibility of each individual taxing jurisdiction with support from their software vendor.

**15) How is user support provided?**

Support is primarily provided by the software vendor for those municipalities that utilized a canned application and typically the support is provided via phone.

**16) What is the current cost in terms of software licensing, hardware requirements, data entry and database maintenance for the tax collection function?**

Cost of collection is fairly consistent across all types of municipalities and is basically dependent on the size of the taxing jurisdiction and the volume of collections.

## **CITY TAX COLLECTIONS**

Survey results: Representatives from 50% of Cities responded and the other was contacted by phone.

There are two cities in Steuben County. Hornell City issues city taxes May 1<sup>st</sup> and Corning City issues city taxes July 1<sup>st</sup>. In addition to the County taxes, the City of Hornell collects both the city and city school taxes. Since 1997 the County makes each city whole for their warrant and enforces delinquent taxes pursuant to inter-municipal agreements (See Appendix – Inter-municipal Agreement) with each city. Steuben County prints the tax bills for both cities.

### **1) How many parcels are there?**

According to the 2007 Annual Report of the Steuben County Real Property Tax Service the parcel count by city is as follows:

City of Corning	4,317
City of Hornell	<u>3,829</u>
TOTAL	8,146

### **2) What type of database is used?**

City of Corning – JP Morgan Chase  
City of Hornell – Williamson Law

### **3) Where is the data presently physically housed?**

Tax collection data for taxes paid locally is physically housed at each municipality. Tax collection data for taxes returned to the County for collection is physically housed in the County's database.

### **4) What type of software is use for access, analysis, and reporting?**

Both cities transmit data to the County electronically. City of Corning uses lockbox services and tax processing services provided by JP Morgan Chase. City of Hornell recently implemented Williamson Law software.

### **5) Who inputs and maintains the data?**

The local tax collector inputs and maintains data in their local database. The County maintains no payment records relative to taxes paid at the local level.

### **6) What methods of payment are accepted?**

Other than the usual methods of payments of cash, check, and money order; neither city has the capability to accept credit card payments or payments via the internet. City of Corning uses lockbox services and tax processing services provided by JP Morgan Chase.

### **7) Is bar coding or scanning options used?**

No

### **8) Who is responsible for system maintenance?**

Typically the software provider in conjunction with the tax collector provides system maintenance.

### **9) What backup and security procedures are in place?**

This is the responsibility of the local tax collector with assistance and support from the software provider.

**10) Is there the ability presently to view individual parcel tax bills and status?**

Yes, by the local tax collectors.

**11) Who has access to the database?**

Local tax collectors.

**12) Is information accessed via the Internet?**

No

**13) Do taxing jurisdictions have high speed internet access?**

Both cities have high speed internet access.

**14) Who is responsible for ensuring data integrity?**

Data integrity is the responsibility of each individual taxing jurisdiction with support from their software vendor.

**15) How is user support provided?**

Support is primarily provided by the software vendor for those municipalities that utilized a canned application and typically the support is provided via phone.

**16) What is the current cost in terms of software licensing, hardware requirements, data entry and database maintenance for the tax collection function?**

Cost of collection is fairly consistent across all types of municipalities and is basically dependent on the size of the taxing jurisdiction and the volume of collections.

## **SCHOOL TAX COLLECTIONS**

There are three city school districts and 18 central school districts that collect taxes. The central school districts issue taxes in September. Unpaid central school taxes are returned to the County in November for re-levy with the town and county taxes in January. During this interim period from November to relevy in January, payments are not accepted on central school taxes by the County. Corning City School offers a two-payment installment option with the 1<sup>st</sup> installment due in October and the 2<sup>nd</sup> installment due in March. Elmira City School District also offers installment payment options (See Appendix – Tax Calendar).

### **1) How many parcels are there?**

According to the 2007 Annual Report of the Steuben County Real Property Tax Service the parcel count by school district is as follows:

Addison	4,456
Alfred-Almond	425
Andover	28
Arkport	1,643
Avoca	2,590
Bath	4,669
Bradford	504
Campbell-Savona	2,973
Canaseraga	39
Canisteo-Greenwood	4,297
Corning-Painted Post	14,423
Dansville	636
Elmira	32
Hammondsport	4,560
Hornell	5,199
Jasper-Troupsburg	2,154
Naples	362
Penn Yan	2
Prattsburgh	2,241
Wayland-Cohocton	3,977
Whitesville	<u>221</u>
TOTAL	55,431

### **2) What type of database is used?**

Only one school district submits their paid returns manually (Whitesville). GST BOCES has developed tax collection software that is used by 11 school districts. Corning City School District uses software developed by their IT departments. The other districts use primarily Allen Tunnell and Williamson Law.

### **3) Where is the data presently physically housed?**

Tax collection data for taxes paid locally is physically housed at each municipality. Tax collection data for taxes returned to the County for collection is physically housed in the County's database.

### **4) What type of software is use for access, analysis, and reporting?**

See #2 above.

**5) Who inputs and maintains the data?**

The local tax collector inputs and maintains data in their local database. The County maintains no payment records relative to taxes paid at the local level.

**6) What methods of payment are accepted?**

Other than the usual methods of payments of cash, check, and money order; no school that reported has the capability to accept credit card payments or payments via the internet. Several of the school districts however do utilize lockbox services including all but one district that uses the GST BOCES software.

**7) Is bar coding or scanning options used?**

GTS BOCES reports that Hammondsport and Bath use bar coding.

**8) Who is responsible for system maintenance?**

Typically the software provider in conjunction with the tax collector provides system maintenance. BOCES provides financial support to the school district for software and seems to have some responsibility or oversight for system maintenance.

**9) What backup and security procedures are in place?**

This is the responsibility of the local tax collector with assistance and support from the software provider.

**10) Is there the ability presently to view individual parcel tax bills and status?**

Yes, by the local tax collectors.

**11) Who has access to the database?**

Local tax collectors.

**12) Is information accessed via the Internet?**

Taxpayers in several of the school districts do have the ability to view individual parcels online with the capability to print tax bills. The GST BOCES has this capability, but only a few of the districts utilize this feature.

**13) Do taxing jurisdictions have high speed internet access?**

Most do have high speed internet access.

**14) Who is responsible for ensuring data integrity?**

Data integrity is the responsibility of each individual taxing jurisdiction with support from their software vendor.

**15) How is user support provided?**

Support is primarily provided by the software vendor for those municipalities that utilized a canned application and typically the support is provided via phone.

**16) What is the current cost in terms of software licensing, hardware requirements, data entry and database maintenance for the tax collection function?**

Cost of collection is basically dependent on the size of the taxing jurisdiction and the volume of collections.

## **DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTION - COUNTY COLLECTIONS**

The County collects delinquent taxes pursuant to RPT Law – Article 11. (See the Appendix for the tax enforcement process.)

### **1) How many parcels are there?**

Countywide there are 55,400 parcels. The County collects only the delinquent tax parcels. The number of delinquent parcels varies from year to year.

### **2) What type of database is used?**

The Steuben County Information Technology Department developed an in-house database and tax collection system. The County currently employs a Sybase database and is rewriting the in-house program to enhance the performance to better meet the needs of the County.

### **3) Where is the data presently physically housed?**

Steuben County Information Technology server.

### **4) What type of software is use for access, analysis, and reporting?**

The in-house developed database and tax collection system has considerable functionality.

### **5) Who inputs and maintains the data?**

The Steuben County Treasurer's Office and the Information Technology Department enters and maintains data relative to tax collection.

### **6) What methods of payment are accepted?**

Cash, Check, Money Order, ACH, and Credit Card.

### **7) Is bar coding or scanning options used?**

No

### **8) Who is responsible for system maintenance?**

Steuben County Information Technology Department.

### **9) What backup and security procedures are in place?**

Redundant backup managed by the Steuben County Information Technology Department.

### **10) Is there the ability presently to view individual parcel tax bills and status?**

YES, by Steuben County Treasurer's Office and Steuben County Information Technology Department. Also inquiry capabilities are accessible by the public at the Steuben County Clerk's Office.

### **11) Who has access to the database?**

See #10

### **12) Is information accessed via the Internet?**

Not at this time.

**13) Do taxing jurisdictions have high speed internet access?**

Yes

**14) Who is responsible for ensuring data integrity?**

Steuben County

**15) How is user support provided?**

Steuben County Information Technology has a primary contact with several personnel that provide backup support.

**16) What is the current cost in terms of software licensing, hardware requirements, data entry and database maintenance for the tax collection function?**

Current costs include:

Sybase Database	\$1,000/month
Security Program	\$900/Year – Countywide
Server maintenance	\$875 / Year
System Analysis	\$67/Hour – chargeback rate
Help Desk	\$48/Hour – chargeback rate

## **Proposed Centralized Tax Collection Database**

A centralized tax collections database would provide greater effectiveness and efficiency to the County, the taxing jurisdictions, the tax collectors, and ultimately the taxpayer. Currently the County's database includes only delinquent tax information for city, village, and school district taxes. Basic paid information regarding town and county tax bills is periodically provided to the County by the local collectors. Taxpayers and other researchers such as lawyers and abstractors desiring tax information need to call each taxing jurisdictions to obtain tax information.

**RECOMMENDATION: It is proposed to develop a countywide tax collection database that includes current and historical data relative to parcel information, tax bills, and payment status. This database will be managed at the County level with taxing jurisdiction access. Eventually this database will be web based with taxpayer inquiry capability.**

### **1) How many parcels will there be on the database?**

All parcels regardless of their taxable status will be included in the database. There are currently approximately 55,500.

### **2) What type of database will be used?**

Sybase relational database

### **3) Where will the data be physically housed?**

The countywide database will be physically housed on a server at Steuben County.

### **4) What type of software will be used for access, analysis, and reporting?**

Visual basic (VB.net)

### **5) Who will input and maintain the data?**

Tax bill data will be generated by Steuben County Real Property Tax Services. The Steuben County Treasurer's Office and the Steuben County Information Technology Department will be responsible for maintaining tax collection data. It is yet to be determined how tax collection data will be uploaded or input into the database but it is probable that the local collectors will provide data electronically to the County and these files will be incorporated into the nightly job stream that will upload to the tax collection database.

### **6) What methods of payment will be accepted?**

Steuben County awarded an RFP to M&T Bank in January 2009 for Merchant Card Services providing capacity to accept credit card payments and also i-check payment for real property taxes via the internet, over the phone, and in person. It is the County's intent to expand this service to include all interested tax collection sites.

### **7) Will bar coding or scanning options be used?**

The feasibility of bar coding or scanning options will be evaluated and will possibly be implemented should there be a positive cost/benefit.

**8) Who will be responsible for system maintenance?**

Steuben County.

**9) What backup and security procedures will be in place?**

Redundant backups – daily, weekly, monthly, with 13 month backup on hand.

**10) Will there be the ability to view individual parcel tax bills and status?**

This ability will initially be available to County personnel followed by local tax collector access and eventually public ability to inquire relative to tax bills and status.

**11) Who will have access?**

The ability to access and update data will be limited to County personnel initially. It is undetermined at this point what direct update access will be afforded to local tax collectors. Tax Collectors will minimally have inquiry access as well as taxpayers and the public at large.

**12) Will the information be accessed via the Internet?**

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) will be utilized for County and Tax Collector access with a possible public web-based system in the future. This needs more study.

**13) Who will be responsible for ensuring data integrity?**

Everyone with update capability will share responsibility for data integrity with oversight provided by the Steuben County Treasurer's Office.

**14) How will user support be provided?**

Steuben County Information Technology Department – Help Desk.

**15) What will be the cost in terms of software licensing, hardware requirements, data entry and database maintenance for the tax collection function?**

It is estimated that development of the programs and monitoring of implementation will cost in excess of \$100,000. Costs include IT System Analysts/Programmers at \$67/hour, IT Help Desk service during implementation at \$48/hour and other fees such as the Time Warner database at \$600/year, Internet at \$600/month, Sybase at \$1000/month, Security software at \$900/year countywide, and server costs at \$875/year. It is estimated that the development phase will require 1.5 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) of the Information Technology staff and that the implementation phase will require .5 FTE.

**16) How will owner name and address correction changes be processed on the tax bills after the tax roll is finalized (but before tax bills are mailed)?**

This process would remain the same. Steuben County Real Property Tax Services (RPTS), the Local Tax Collectors, and Local Assessors are responsible to make late address changes. Assessors make changes in July and August after filing of the final roll and submit a revised file to Steuben County Real Property Tax Services. If changes in address are required close to the printing of tax bills, the RPTS makes the changes and sends notice to the Assessors of the change. This same process is followed prior to the printing of subsequent tax bills. Changes required after printing of the bill but prior to mailing are sent to the Tax Collectors and also the Assessor. Tax Collectors need to be reasonably prudent regarding identification and communication of correct addresses for returned mail.

**17) How will unpaid county/town and school bills be processed?**

This process would remain the same within the County's delinquent tax system. The County enforces collection. Unpaid school bills are relieved with the next town and county tax.

**18) Do you plan to provide web services delivery for tax roll information and tax paid bill information to the taxpayers on-line?**

This is an eventual objective following access by taxing jurisdictions and verification that the implementation process results in data integrity.

**19) What suggestions or changes do you anticipate are needed for RPS or another system to accommodate your tax collection process (if they are universally achievable in RPS or another system).**

No changes are anticipated in the RPS system. It is hoped to eventually link the tax collection information to an online assessment information database.

**20) How will you process bank code information? Any plans for improving the current process?**

Bank codes are currently on tax bills for batch mailings for escrow accounts. This process would not change.

**21) Are you planning one universal tax bill for all towns/counties, all school districts. If not are you continuing with diversified bills for each?**

As much as possible the County would prefer universal tax bills, but this is not possible at present. Many school district bills are printed by BOCES and some taxing jurisdictions offer installment options.

**22) For the actual bill paying, are you anticipating using one bank to process everyone?**

Not necessarily, but there may be a cost benefit to issuing a countywide RFP for lockbox services.

## Implementation Plan

### 1) How do you propose to implement, RFP or internal resources?

Steuben County has an exceptional and extremely capable Information Technology Staff that has expertise in tax bill processing and the delinquent tax system. Internal resources will be utilized to implement the countywide database relative to tax collection and also to implement other enhancements to the tax collections system as determined feasible and cost effective. The County may request presentations from commercial contractors to determine if any can meet the County's requirements. If so, an RFP may be issued for the specific enhancement, but this is unlikely since there are many advantages to customized software. The Steuben County Treasurer entered into an internal service agreement in February 2009 with the Steuben County Information Technology Department to develop and implement the tax collection database (See Appendix – Internal Service Agreement).

**a. If using a contractor, what would the RFP contain? - N/A**

**b. When will it be published? - N/A**

### 2) When would a centralized county-wide database be created?

This will be a phased-in process. The projected time table follows:

The tentative timeline is as follows:

2009	Develop programs for the centralized countywide database and universal software	
2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	Implement Town & County database
2010	2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Debug program and develop the web-based application
2011	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	Implement Town & County Tax Collector access to the database
2011	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	Implement Villages with access
2011	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	Implement Cities with access
2011	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Implement School Districts with access
2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	Implement taxpayer access to database

### 3) When would the local collection offices be given access?

This is projected to be in 2011 as each type of taxing jurisdiction is implemented.

### 4) What number of staff will be required?

To be determined. The Information Technology Director indicates up to 3. Adendum: The IT director intends to put together a team of three Systems Analysis/Programs to work on this project.

### 5) What will be the implementation costs?

It is estimated that development of the programs and monitoring of implementation will cost in excess of \$100,000. Costs include IT System Analysts/Programmers at \$67/hour, IT Help Desk service during implementation at \$48/hour and other fees such as the Time Warner database at \$600/year, Internet at \$600/month, Sybase at \$1000/month, Security software at \$900/year countywide, and server costs at \$875/year. It is estimated that the development phase will require 1.5 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) of the Information Technology staff and that the implementation phase will require .5 FTE.

### 6) What is your communication plan?

Initially a resolution of Steuben County Legislature supporting a centralized county-wide database will provide public awareness and hopefully support. Subsequently the County will foster direct contact and communications with tax collectors and public officials relative to the advantages and intentions of the County to enhance the tax collection process.

**7) How do you intend to get buy in from all tax collectors and taxing jurisdictions?**

Keeping the lines of communication open and seeking input from tax collectors and taxing jurisdictions. This process will start in April 2009 when town and city tax collectors meet with the Steuben County Treasurer to settle their 2009 tax collections turning over the unpaid bills to the County for enforcement.

*“Death and taxes may be inevitable, but they shouldn’t be related.” J.C. Watts, Jr.*

# OTHER OPTIONS THAT COULD ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE DELINQUENT TAX SYSTEM

## County Supported - Centralized Uniform Collection Software

*According to the New York State Office of Real Property Services:  
How can tax collection be simplified?*

*In the typical county, numerous jurisdictions are responsible for the collection of taxes. Some tax collecting entities make use of tax collection software provided by one of various vendors, while others collect taxes manually and issue manual receipts. The result of the disparate is a collection/enforcement system that can be labor intensive, fragmented, and difficult to manage.*

*To simplify the system and align interactions among the taxing jurisdictions, a centralized software system and database can be established. Such a system can result in numerous benefits. One system can be used to account for city, town, county, village and school tax collection, as well as collection of delinquent taxes.*

### *Benefits of Centralized Tax Collection Software include:*

- 1. Fiscal savings can be realized and cooperation among local officials can expand.*
- 2. The system is fully integrated from point of collection through management of delinquencies.*
- 3. The user-friendly system has common functionality accessible by collectors and staff countywide.*
- 4. Data collection is simplified and data is automatically accessible by municipalities, schools and the county.*
- 5. All of the charges on a given parcel are viewable by any user.*
- 6. Through countywide error checking and balancing, inconsistencies are eliminated.*
- 7. Online access can greatly reduce taxpayer confusion and inquiries.*
- 8. The unified system results in reduced management requirements.*
- 9. The software is installed by the same vendor countywide and requires less support,*
- 10. Training needs are coordinated countywide.*
- 11. Collection of installment payments is simplified for collectors and taxpayers, yielding greater collections.*
- 12. An improved rate of collection can impact county budgets and lead to fewer foreclosures.*

### *What funding is available for a centralized tax collection software system?*

*The Department of State administers the Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) Program. Awards are available on a competitive basis to two or more municipalities to cover the costs associated with shared services and consolidations. Such costs include, but are not limited to, legal and consultant services, feasibility studies, capital improvements and other necessary expenses.*

**SURVEY RESULTS:** The responses were mixed but most would only consider support and utilization of County developed and supported collection software if it is cost effective to the taxing jurisdiction and if the software performance is enhanced. School districts expressed concerns relative to their collections in more than one county. BOCES currently offers supported tax collection software to school districts resulting in minimal costs to the taxing jurisdiction. Most jurisdictions are pleased with existing software. Users of Williamson Law and Allen Tunnel especially indicated satisfaction.

The County receives data from taxing jurisdictions in a multitude of formats, which often requires the Information Technology staff to reformat many of the electronically submitted files so that they can be uploaded into the County's system. The Steuben County Treasurer's Office is required to manually enter data into the County's system for those taxing jurisdictions that process payments manually and therefore

can not provide files that can be uploaded. This is very time consuming and not an effective or efficient method to capture data.

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is recommended that the County should develop or acquire and support a universal software platform that can be utilized by all taxing jurisdictions. It is critical that each location's software should be able to easily communicate and transfer data to the County's database. Utilization of this software should be optional, but the files transmitted to the County will be required to be in a format that can easily be transferred without any revisions by the County. The established file format should be compatible with the major vendor provided software such as BAS, Williamson Law, GST BOCES, and Allen Tunnel or these vendors should reprogram to provide files in the requested format. Jurisdictions that are currently processing tax collections manually and wish to continue to do so will be required to reimburse the County for the labor and any other costs required to input collection data into the County's system.

## Payment Option Enhancements

### **SURVEY RESULTS:**

**CREDIT CARD:** No taxing jurisdiction indicated that they have the capability of accept credit card payments. Responses to the survey indicated that this service would simplify the payment process providing ease of payment. This is a service that is not currently available and is desired by most taxing jurisdictions.

**INTERNET ACCESS AND PAYMENT CAPABILITY:** No taxing jurisdictions indicated the capability to access tax information via the internet with the capability to make online payments. Some jurisdictions did have the capability for the taxpayer to view their tax information and to print a tax bill. Responses indicated that making tax information and payment available online would be beneficial to taxpayers.

**BAR CODES:** No taxing municipal jurisdiction and only two school districts indicated utilization of bar codes and scanning for tax payment processing. Responders indicated that bar codes would facilitate acceptance of tax payments especially by banks.

**LOCK BOX:** A few of the taxing jurisdictions indicated that they utilize lock box services. Most of the school districts that responded to the survey have lock box capabilities with local banks accepting tax payments. A couple jurisdictions contract with JP Morgan Chase for total tax collection processing.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Steuben County awarded an RFP to M&T Bank in January 2009 for Merchant Card Services providing the capability to accept credit card payments and also i-check payment for real property taxes via the internet, over the phone, and in person. It is the County's intent to expand this service to include all interested tax collection sites. The County intends to charge the user (taxpayer) of this service a convenience fee.

The County prints the tax bills for most of the taxing jurisdictions: all of the towns, both cities, all of the villages except one, and approximately 50% of the school districts. Bar coding bills would be an enhancement to the collection process facilitating acceptance of tax payments by banks and lock box providers. The feasibility of implementing bar coding on the tax bills that are produced by the County should be investigated. The County should study the cost/benefit of implementing lock box services for delinquent taxes collected at the County level. If warranted the County could issue an RFP that would encompass all jurisdictions interested in this service. A centralized RFP could result in substantial savings countywide.

## Centralized Tax Collection

### **According to the New York State Office of Real Property Services: Can all tax collection functions be consolidated at the county?**

*In order for the county to take over all responsibility for town and school tax collection, a countywide referendum is required. In counties with no cities, a simple majority vote would be required. Otherwise, a “split referendum” would be held. Passage would require majorities in all of the towns (jointly considered), as well as all of the cities (jointly considered). For villages to transfer the tax collection function to the counties, as well, such a referendum would consider: 1) the villages jointly, 2) the town residents outside of the villages jointly, and 3) any cities jointly.*

*Alternatively, there is an option for the town to appoint an official to act as the deputy collector / receiver. By agreement among the towns, they could each appoint the same county official to act as deputy. Under this scenario, taxes would be payable both at the town level and the county level. (Interested officials may wish to review the relevant Opinions of the State Comptroller Nos. 75-1067 and 80-774, as well as Opinions of the Attorney General (Inf.) Nos. 95-5 and 97-11)*

### **SURVEY RESULTS:**

Survey results were mixed, but most responders did not favor centralized tax collection.

Responders identified perceived advantages such as:

- less confusion and consistency with everything payable at one place,
- better control,
- reduced duplication of effort resulting in cost savings especially at the local level,
- school districts especially felt that centralized tax collection could free up personnel, and
- potential countywide taxpayer savings.

Responders were concerned about the impact on municipal revenues and the decreased level of service sighting that the current service delivery provides a convenience that is best performed at the local level.

Issues identified include:

- no local collection locations will make paying inaccessible,
- transportation issues because Steuben County is so big and so rural,
- many people like to pay in person and in cash,
- lack of weekend and evening hours that many local tax collectors provide,
- decrease in interest revenues to municipalities,
- good idea, but doubt that the County can handle the extreme volume,
- takes power from taxing jurisdictions – too many things out of local municipal control,
- concerns about municipal investments in existing software that no longer would be needed,
- takes away from maintaining contact, trust and communication with local town officials,
- cost/benefit analysis needed, could actually cost more,
- concerns about when taxing jurisdictions would receive their tax payments from the County.

One responder suggested that there could be a possible benefit if school taxes were collected in each town, presumably by the local municipal collector.

**RECOMMENDATION: This is not a high priority and should not be considered by the County at this time.**

# Installment Payments

## **HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE**

February 2005: Issues relative to the allowance of installment payments for current town and county taxes was investigated and reported to the Administration Committee. It was reported that

- The County would need to adopt a Local Law providing for installment payments.
- Each town would be required to pass a resolution authorizing the installment payment of town taxes. Otherwise, only the County taxes could be paid in installments.

September 2005: A letter was sent to Town Supervisors / Tax Collectors requesting comment on a proposed local law that would allow installment payment of current taxes. The majority of responders opposed enactment of the local law. The key points of the proposed local law included:

- Payments would be allowed in two nearly-equal installments
- The 1<sup>st</sup> payment shall be due by January 31<sup>st</sup>
- No clear date established for the due date of the second installment – suggestions ranged from March 31 to June 30
- The second installment could be paid with interest anytime between February and the final due date
- Installment payments due after March 31 would be collected by the County
- Interest would be retained by the collecting municipality
- Escrow accounts would not be given the installment option

## **OTHER COUNTY – INSTALLMENT OPTIONS**

Highlights of two other Counties with installment options:

- Schuyler County
  - Two equal payments: January 31 and July 1
  - Schuyler County has eight (8) towns
  - First installment must be paid in January
  - County imposes 1% Service Charge on total tax bill if taxpayer selects installment option
  - No interest or penalties from February to July
- Clinton County
  - Four Payments: Jan, Feb, March, and April
  - Town collects January payment – County collects subsequent installment payments
  - 2% surcharge added to entire bill – no penalty or interest fees for installment period
  - Implemented in 1998 – required one additional staff because of increased workload

Section 928A of Real Property Tax Law refers to partial payment of taxes.

## **COLLECTION HISTORY**

Over the past six years (2003-2008) an average of sixty-eight percent (68%) of the town and county tax levy has been collected in January by the local tax collector. During the total local collection period from January to March an average of ninety percent (90%) of the town and county tax levy was collected (See appendix – Collection History).

Currently Corning City School District offers a two payment installment option. For the 2007 tax year, 859 parcels were returned to the County for taxpayers that failed to pay their second installment.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

Towns that responded to the survey overwhelmingly opposed installment payment options, especially if the first payment is required in January. It was noted by several responders that January is a problem month for

the first installment because many people can not pay their taxes immediate following the holidays and because many taxpayers use their income refunds to pay their real property taxes.

There were concerns about the consequences and potential impact of failure to pay subsequent installments, especially if there are no reminder notices. It was felt that there may be confusion about whether taxes are paid in full and that taxpayers may miss payments on subsequent installments subjecting them to additional interest and penalties.

Many responders were also concerned about the additional financial burden on towns. Potential increased costs identified include the following:

- printing of bills designed for installments
- postage for mailing the extra receipts
- cost for print and postage if reminder notices are issued
- increased manpower to handle additional payments at local level
- loss of penalty and interest earning to taxing jurisdictions
- increased bookwork

Some towns expressed concerns that they may be required to borrow for operating expenses.

**DATA PROCESSING:**

Major modifications to the Counties' current billing and delinquent tax systems would be required. The tax bill will need to be redesigned to accommodate two or more payment options and should be printed on perforated paper for easy detachment of payment coupons. Perforated paper is more expensive. The County's delinquent tax system (database) will require programming to accommodate multiple installments on current taxes.

Modifications to local tax collection systems would be required to accommodate multiple payments. This is a mandate by the County on Town and City tax collectors to change their programs and methods of collection.

**INSTALLMENT PAYMENT OPTION AVAILABLE FOR DELINQUENT TAXES**

Steuben County offers an installment payment option for delinquent taxes. A down payment of 10% is required. The term can be up to 24 months. All newly issued taxes during the term of the installment contract must be paid timely. This has been an effective tool assisting delinquent taxpayers to become current on their taxes. In 2008, 854 contracts were written with a default rate of 21% (2007 - 784 contract and defaults rate of 24%).

**RECOMMENDATION:** It seems that the benefit of implementing an installment payment option for current town and county taxes would not be substantial enough to justify the cost especially with the apparent opposition by the majority of towns that responded to the survey. Both the County and local tax collection jurisdictions would have a financial impact to implement installment payments of current taxes. Local collectors are concerned about reduced town fees and timely receipt of tax dollars. Installment options for current taxes may actually reduce the timely collection of taxes, depending on the month of subsequent installments. The County may be required to pay towns the balance of their warrant without sufficient collections to meet this outlay potentially resulting in the need to borrow. In 2008 only 9.82% of tax payers failed to pay their town and county taxes to the local tax collector. The County's installment payment option provides an opportunity for delinquent tax payers to spread their taxes over 24 payments and has proven to be an effective tool to assist taxpayers in their effort to become current with taxes.

## **Other Survey Suggestions to Enhance Tax Collection**

The majority of taxing jurisdictions did not favor shorter local collection periods. Most felt that this would be a burden on taxpayers that already have difficulty making timely payments. Collectors of town and county taxes reported that many taxpayers have difficulty paying in January following the holidays and often wait for income tax returns to pay their real property taxes.

One responder felt that the County should investigate combining tax collection and assessment into one centralized County office. Another responder felt that the priority should not be tax collection responding that “the horse is before the cart” and that “the County needs to develop a plan to implement uniform assessment.”

The bottom line was effectively stated that “sharing services in any cost effective manner would be welcome.”

## Steuben County – Tax Collection Questionnaire

Steuben County has received a grant from NYS to study tax collection within the County. NYS's primary objective is focused on establishing a centralized database containing every parcel and its taxable status that is accessible by the taxing jurisdictions and managed at the County level. ***Our primary objective is to work collaboratively to identify strategies that would enhance both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the current countywide tax collection process.***

The County would like your input regarding several issues relative to tax collection. Please **return ASAP, but no later than January 10, 2009.** A self-addressed envelope is enclosed or you may **fax your responses: 607-664-2188.** If you have any questions, please contact me at 607-664-2400 or by email: [carolw@co.steuben.ny.us](mailto:carolw@co.steuben.ny.us).

**BASIC INFORMATION:** Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Municipality: (Circle One) City, Town, Village, School District \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_ Tax Collector \_\_\_\_ Chief Executive Officer (Supervisor, Mayor, Etc)

Number of years in position: \_\_\_\_\_

### **COMPUTERIZATION - HARDWARE / SOFTWARE:**

Do you currently file your tax returns (paid and unpaid) to the County Treasurer's Office electronically?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, why not: \_\_\_\_\_

What software do you use for tax collection?

- \_\_\_\_\_ None (Manual)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Excel \_\_\_\_ Other Spreadsheet (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Williamson Law
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate annual cost of software?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Less than \$1,000
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 - \$2,999
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$3,000 - \$4,999
- \_\_\_\_\_ Over \$5,000

Should the County develop tax collection software for utilization by all municipalities?

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No Why? (Check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Universal system – the same program used by all tax collectors
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improved support with everyone utilizing the same software
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mandatory electronic filing with the County Treasurer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reduced cost to municipality

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXISTING SYSTEM**

Methods of payments accepted:

- Credit Card
- Lock Box
- Payments Via the Internet
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Is tax bill information and status accessible by the taxpayer via the Internet?

\_\_\_\_\_ Does your taxing jurisdiction have high speed internet access?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are Bar coding or scanning options utilized?

Who prints your tax bills? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is responsible for ensuring data integrity? \_\_\_\_\_

How is user support provided? \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCAL TAX COLLECTION COSTS (Approximate):**

- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Tax Collector and other labor related costs
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Office costs (space, heat, postage, etc)
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTALLMENT PAYMENT:**

Do you know that the County currently offers an installment payment option for taxes that are delinquent?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No (Contact our office for more information.)

Would you support or favor other installment payment options? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Check all options that you feel the County should consider:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Installment options (January to March) with two or three near equal payments (municipality keeps accumulated interest on amounts collected locally)

\_\_\_\_\_ Installment option with two near equal payments with the first payment due in **January** and the second payment due in the month of: (list your preferences in order of priority)

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Potential issues to consider: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you support or favor a shorter local collection period? (For example – Just January)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER COLLECTION OPTIONS – OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

Would you support or favor the following countywide web-based services:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Centralized database of every parcel with tax information
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Tax search capabilities for the amount of current taxes
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Taxpayer capability to print a tax bill and make a payment online
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Capability to search tax information for prior years
- \_\_\_\_\_ Centralized/uniform collection software – supported by the County
- \_\_\_\_\_ On line property description information: (For Example: size of parcel, location of parcel, assessment, equalization rate, and estimated market value based on assessment)

Other suggestions for improvement of the tax-collection system in Steuben County:

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Would you support or favor centralized tax collection? (All taxes collected at a central location, probably the County Treasurer’s Office) \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages \_\_\_\_\_

Disadvantages \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS:

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*Thank you for participating in our efforts to improve the tax collection process.*

Carol S Whitehead  
Steuben County Treasurer

**STEUBEN COUNTY - Parcel Count and Tax Collection Offices**

Assessing Unit	2007 Parcel Count	Tax Collection Offices			
		Town/City	Village	School	Total
ADDISON	1,275	1	1	1	3
AVOCA	1,337	1	1	1	3
BATH	5,014	1	2	1	4
BRADFORD	534	1	-	1	2
CAMERON	781	1	-	-	1
CAMPBELL	1,592	1	-	1	2
CANISTEO	2,025	1	1	1	3
CATON	1,264	1	-	-	1
COHOCTON	1,777	1	1	-	2
CORNING	3,253	1	2	-	3
CORNING CITY	4,317	1	-	-	1
DANSVILLE	1,254	1	-	1	2
ERWIN	3,251	1	1	1	3
FREMONT	755	1	-	-	1
GREENWOOD	705	1	-	-	1
HARTSVILLE	573	1	-	-	1
HORNBY	979	1	-	-	1
HORNELLSVILLE	2,417	1	3	2	6
HORNELL CITY	3,829	1	-	1	2
HOWARD	1,166	1	-	-	1
JASPER	871	1	-	1	2
LINDLEY	1,009	1	-	-	1
PRATTSBURGH	1,858	1	-	1	2
PULTENEY	1,663	1	-	-	1
RATHBONE	766	1	-	-	1
THURSTON	979	1	-	-	1
TROUPSBURG	876	1	-	-	1
TUSCARORA	883	1	-	-	1
URBANA	1,959	1	1	1	3
WAYLAND	2,233	1	1	1	3
WAYNE	1,581	1	-	-	1
WEST UNION	528	1	-	-	1
WHEELER	1,012	1	-	-	1
WOODHULL	1,128	1	-	-	1
<u>Outside of County</u>					
Andover	-	-	-	1	1
Canaseraga	-	-	-	1	1
Elmira	-	-	-	1	1
Naples	-	-	-	1	1
PennYan	-	-	-	1	1
Whitesville	-	-	-	1	1
Steuben County	(Delinquent Taxes )				1
	<b>55,444</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>70</b>

**Collection History - Town & County Tax Levy**

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
Town & County Tax Levy	\$ 48,921,350	\$ 52,997,236	\$ 56,817,706	\$ 58,608,805	\$ 60,991,798	\$ 62,568,385
Total Paid @ 3/31	43,881,226	47,655,533	51,410,266	52,824,360	54,905,541	56,423,143
% of Levy Paid by March	89.70%	89.92%	90.48%	90.13%	90.02%	90.18%
Paid January	33,048,860	36,730,852	38,659,272	\$ 40,008,622	\$ 41,791,281	\$ 42,189,682
% of Levy Paid in Jan	67.56%	69.31%	68.04%	68.26%	68.52%	67.43%
Total Parcels	54407	54723	55000	55232	55346	55444
Unpaid Amount	5,040,124	5,341,703	5,407,440	5,784,445	6,086,257	6,145,242
# Unpaid Parcels	5133	5191	5225	5261	5295	5444
% of Unpaid Parcels @ 3/31	9.43%	9.49%	9.50%	9.53%	9.57%	9.82%
% of Unpaid Amount @ 3/31	10.30%	10.08%	9.52%	9.87%	9.98%	9.82%

**TAXPAYER - INTEREST & FEES**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Town & County	None	1%	2%	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%
<b>County Fee 5%</b>												
Village Hammondsport				5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	18%	
Village of South Corning				5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	18%	
Village of Addison						4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	15%	
Village of Almond						4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	15%	
Village of Arkport						3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	14%	
Village of Avoca						3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	14%	
Village of Bath						3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	14%	
Village of Canisteo						3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	14%	
Village of Cohocton						5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	16%	
Village of North Hornell						4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	15%	
Village of Painted Post						3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	14%	
Village of Riverside						2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	13%	
Village of Savona						3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	14%	
Village of Wayland						4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	15%	
<b>County Relevy Fee 7%</b>												
<b>Central Schools:</b>												
Addison									None	1%	9%	
Alfred-Almond									None	1%	9%	
Andover									None	1%	9%	
Arkport									None	1%	9%	
Avoca									None	1%	9%	
Bath									None	1%	9%	
Bradford									None	1%	9%	
Campbell-Savona									None	1%	10%	
Canaseraga									None	1%	9%	
Canisteo-Greenwood									None	1%	9%	
Dansville									None	1%	10%	
Hammondsport									None	1%	9%	
Jasper-Troupsburg									None	1%	9%	
Naples									None	1%	10%	
PennYan									None	1%	9%	
Prattsburgh									None	1%	10%	
Wayland-Cohocton									None	1%	9%	
Whitesville									None	1%	9%	
<b>County Relevy Fee 7%</b>												
Elmira City School	4%	5%	6%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	None	1%	2%
Corning City School - 1st Inst	4%	5%	6%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	20%	None	2%	3%
Corning City School - 2nd Inst	None	None	None	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	None	None	None
Hornell City School	3%	4%	5%	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%	None	1%	2%
Corning City	6%	7%	8%	14%	15%	16%	17%	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Hornell City	9%	15%			1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%

| BEGINNING OF TAX YEAR

## Tax Levy Calendar

Taxing Unit	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Town & County	Issued	Local	Local	County	County	County	County	County	County	County	County	County
Village Hammondsport	Relevied		Issued - Int #1	Local	Local	Local	Local - Int #2	Local	Local	Local		
Village of South Corning	Relevied		Issued	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local		
All Other Villages	Relevied					Issued	Local	Local	Local	Local		
Central Schools	Relevied								Issued	Local		
Corning City School	Local	Local	Int #2	County	County	County	County	County	County	Issued - Int #1	Local	Local
Elmira City School	Local	Local	Int #2	County	County	County	County	County	County	Issued - Int #1	Local	Local
Hornell City School - Withinin the City	Local	Local	Local	County	County	County	County	County	County	Issued	Local	Local
Hornell City School - Outside the City	Local	County	County	County	County	County	County	County	County	Issued	Local	Local
Corning City	Local	Local	Local	County	County	County	Issued	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local
Hornell City	Local	Local	County	County	Issued	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT**

**AGREEMENT** made effective the 1st day of July, 2004, by and between the **COUNTY OF STEUBEN**, a municipal corporation organized and existing under and by virtue of the Laws of the State of New York and being one of its political subdivisions, having its principal place of business in the Village of Bath, Steuben County, State of New York, hereinafter called "County", and the **CITY OF CORNING**, a corporation existing under the Laws of the State of New York with an office located at Nassar Civic Center, City of Corning, New York 14830, hereinafter called "City".

**WITNESSETH:**

**WHEREAS**, the County currently conducts on an annual basis tax foreclosure proceedings for all delinquent real property taxes due the County and for certain other municipalities located within the County, and

**WHEREAS**, the City is currently conducting tax foreclosure proceedings pursuant to Article 11 of the Real Property Tax Law for real property taxes levied by the City and the Corning City School District for real property located within the municipal limits of the City, and

**WHEREAS**, the tax year for the City runs from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July to the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June of the following calendar year, and

**WHEREAS**, the Corning City School District's tax year runs from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July to the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June of the immediately following year, and

**WHEREAS**, the City is desirous of having the County conduct on its behalf the tax foreclosure proceedings for the unpaid taxes levied by the City and the unpaid school taxes levied upon real property within the City commencing with the unpaid city taxes due for the tax year 2004 and the unpaid school taxes for the school year 2004-2005, which city and school district taxes are hereinafter referred to as Real Property Taxes.

**NOW THEREFORE**, in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants hereinafter contained, the parties agree as follows:

**PURPOSE:** In conjunction with the tax foreclosure proceedings that the County is conducting for the real property taxes due itself and other municipalities located within Steuben County, the County agrees to conduct tax foreclosure proceedings to collect the Real Property Taxes due on properties located within the municipal limits of the City of Corning.

The County will become the collector of all unpaid delinquent real property taxes due the Corning City School District for real property taxes due by the City to the Corning City School District commencing with the 2004-2005 school tax year.

The County will become the collector of all unpaid delinquent real property taxes due the City for the real property taxes due the City commencing with the 2004-2005 fiscal tax year.

**SCHOOL TAXES:** With respect to unpaid delinquent school taxes for which the City is or may become liable for payment to the Corning City School District, other than school taxes on city-owned properties for which the City is or will be liable, it is understood between the parties that the Corning City School District shall deliver to the County Treasurer's Office on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April of each year, a list of all properties on which there are unpaid school taxes, together with the amounts thereof, which taxes were levied by the Corning City School District during the school fiscal year then in effect when such list is delivered.

Upon delivery of such list, the County shall undertake collection of such unpaid taxes and shall pay to the Corning City School District on behalf of the City the amount of such unpaid taxes required to be paid to the School District pursuant to New York State Real Property Tax Law.

**CITY TAXES:** With respect to unpaid City taxes, the City shall on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2005 and on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April of each year thereafter, deliver to the County Treasurer's Office a certified list of all properties on which there are unpaid taxes, together with an itemization for each property showing the tax amount due, interest and penalties, which taxes were levied and due the City in and for the City tax fiscal year immediately preceding the year in which such list is delivered. The County shall pay to the City on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month thereafter through September the amount of taxes collected by the County on behalf of the City during the respective month. On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of October 2004, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of October of each year thereafter, the County shall pay to the City the full amount of unpaid taxes, interest and penalties as shown on the list delivered to the County on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April of that year.

**TAX FORECLOSURE PROCEDURE:** The County shall conduct the tax foreclosure proceeding in conformance with Article 11 of the New York State Real Property Laws.

The City may not withhold any parcel of real property from the list of properties having unpaid taxes from the list delivered annually to the County.

The County may refuse to foreclose upon any parcel of real property that is located within the municipal limits when it is determined by the County to be in its best interest not to foreclose upon a parcel of real property shall include but not be limited to those specified in Real Property Tax Law §1138.

Upon the County acquiring title to real property located within the municipal boundaries as a result of a tax foreclosure proceeding, the County will send a list of such real property to the Corning City Assessor, Corning City Chamberlain.

**INSPECTION PROPERTY MAINTENANCE/DEMOLITION:** The County may perform an inspection of all foreclosed upon real property to be conducted by such persons or agencies as the County may authorize.

The City shall be responsible for the maintenance of any properties for which title has been granted to the County pursuant to a real property tax foreclosure proceeding.

In the event that it is determined that a structure located on a foreclosed upon parcel of property is unsalvageable and should be demolished, the City may order the demolition of such structure and in such event, the City shall be responsible for such demolition.

**SALE OF PROPERTY:** All sales of such foreclosed upon real property shall be pursuant to the rules and regulations of the County.

Any property not repurchased by the prior owner or owners pursuant to the rules and regulations of the County (including Chapter 602 of the Laws of 1993, §1184) will be sold at public auction by the County at the next annual auction of foreclosed properties that is held by the County.

The City shall be responsible for determining if a property has complied with the City codes.

**NOTIFICATION:** Should it be necessary to notify any property owner or person with regard to code violations, the City shall be responsible for such notifications.

Nothing in this Agreement creates any right to notice of violations to a prospective purchaser at foreclosure sale and a purchaser at such sale will be responsible for complying with all laws including bringing purchased property up to Codes.

**PROCEEDS:** All proceeds from the public auction of the foreclosed upon real property and from the sale to prior owners of foreclosed upon real property shall be the property of the County.

In the event that a parcel of foreclosed real property is sold for less than the taxes due on the property, then the County shall incur such loss.

This agreement can only be modified or amended by a written agreement that is signed by both parties to this agreement.

**TERMINATION:** Either party may terminate this Agreement upon ninety (90) days written notice, one party to the other.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF,** the parties hereto have executed this Agreement the day and year first above written.

COUNTY OF STEUBEN

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steuben County Treasurer

CITY OF CORNING

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Corning City Manager

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steuben County Attorney

RESOLUTION NO. 224-87

County of Steuben  
LOCAL LAW TENTATIVELY NO SIX OF THE YEAR 1987  
A local law permitting the Steuben County Treasurer to collect delinquent village taxes.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the County of Steuben as follows:

SECTION 1: LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the within Local Law to establish and adopt a procedure permitting the Steuben County Treasurer to collect delinquent village taxes upon request by any village to said County.

SECTION 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS

COUNTY TREASURER: the duly elected, appointed, fiscal officer of the County of Steuben designated to perform the duties prescribed by law and directed by the County Legislature.

VILLAGE: any duly incorporated village in Steuben County authorized by the State of New York to function as a municipal corporation.

DELINQUENT TAXES: any village tax which remains due and unpaid after the last date for collection of said tax, levied after passage of this local law.

SECTION 3: PROCEDURE

1. The Village Treasurer shall, within two weeks after the last date authorized by law for the collection of said tax, prepare the account and certification, as required by law, of the remaining unpaid taxes and shall forward same to the respective village legislative body for appropriate approval and forwarding to the Steuben County Treasurer.
2. Within two weeks prior to the levy of the town and county taxes, the account and certification of delinquent village taxes remaining unpaid shall be transmitted by the County Treasurer to the County Legislature body, which shall cause the amount of such unpaid taxes, together with seven percentum of the amount of principal and interest, to be relieved upon the real property upon which the same were originally imposed by the village. The amount relieved pursuant to this section shall include village taxes payable to installments which shall have remained unpaid after the date upon which the last installment was due. After re-levy on the town and county tax roll, all such relieved amounts shall become a part of the total tax to be collected. Such relieved amounts shall be considered due and owing to the County Treasurer to reimburse the County for the amount advanced pursuant to subdivision two of this section.
3. The County Treasurer shall, on or before the first day of April following the receipt of the account and certification of delinquent village taxes, pay to the village treasurer, the amount of returned delinquent village taxes remaining unpaid, including interest accumulated to the time of the return of the tax roll and warrant by the village treasurer to the village board of trustees, provided that the County Treasurer shall retain the per centum penalty imposed as provided by Paragraph (a) of Subdivision Four of Section Fourteen Hundred thirty Six of the Real Property Tax law of the State of New York.
4. The same proceeding in all respects shall be had for the collection of the amount so directed to be raised by the County Legislature as are provided by law in relation to the County taxes.

## STEUBEN COUNTY - INTERNAL SERVICE AGREEMENT

**THIS INTERNAL SERVICE AGREEMENT** is entered into on the 26th day of February, 2009 by and between the Steuben County Treasurer's Office and the Steuben County Information Technology Department.

### Scope of Work:

The Steuben County Information Technology Department shall work with the Steuben County Treasurer's Office and others as deemed necessary to provide the following services:

- Develop and implement a countywide tax collection database that includes current and historical data relative to parcel information, tax bills, and payment status. This database will include all parcels within the County and will be managed at the County level. The database will be accessible to taxing jurisdiction and will have taxpayer inquiry capability.
- Develop or acquire and support a universal software platform that can be utilized by all taxing jurisdictions. Utilization of this software shall be optional, but the files transmitted to the County for upload to the centralized tax collection database will be required to be in a format that can easily be transferred without revisions by the County.

### Development and Implementation Costs:

The estimated cost to develop and implement the centralized tax collection database and universal software platform is anticipated to exceed \$100,000. Costs include IT personnel, training, and other licensing and equipment costs such as the Time Warner database, Internet, Sybase, Security, and Server fees.

### Funding:

All outside funding secured for the services described by this Internal Service Agreement will be allocated to the Steuben County Information Technology Department to offset development, implementation, and supports costs.

### Timeline:

The tentative timeline is as follows:

2009	Develop programs for the centralized countywide database and universal software
2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Implement Town & County database
2010	2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter Debug program and develop the web-based application
2011	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Implement Town & County Tax Collector access to the database
2011	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter Implement Villages with access
2011	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter Implement Cities with access
2011	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter Implement School Districts with access
2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Implement taxpayer access to database

### ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

By: *Carol S Whitehead*

Name: Carol S Whitehead

Title: Steuben County Treasurer

By: *Ken Peaslee*

Name: Ken Peaslee

Title: SC IT Director

By: *Mark Alger*

Name: Mark Alger

Title: Steuben County Administrator