

FROM: John Winkler, General Manager

- A. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION REPORT:** The Information and Education Report detailing Information and Education activities for the month of January 2017, is attached for your review.
- B. **PERSONNEL/MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:**
1. **Sonya Carlson**, Program Assistant for the Omaha office, submitted her resignation on January 13, 2017. The District is currently in the process of filling this position.
- C. **REPORT ON PURCHASES – CONSTRUCTION SERVICES, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND PERSONAL PROPERTY:** Pursuant to Board direction, the report indicating construction services, professional services and personal property purchases from the month of January 2017, is attached for your review. Please review this report and contact me if you have any questions.
- D. **CURRENT AND ON-GOING PROJECTS – P-MRNRD LEGAL COUNSEL:** A copy of current and on-going projects for District Legal Counsel, Husch Blackwell, as of January 17, 2017, and a picture of the refurbished Auto Glass Now sign are attached for your review. I would ask each Director to review this report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
- E. **PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP REPORT:** The minutes to the January 26, 2017, Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership Subcommittee meeting are attached. The next Partnership meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2017.
- F. **NEWS CLIPS:**
- ✓ January 12, 2017, Washington Co. Pilot-Tribune & Enterprise article, NRD connecting Lakeland Estates Water Co. to new source
  - ✓ January 16, 2017, Washington Co. Pilot-Tribune & Enterprise article, Merle Andersen, 89
  - ✓ January 17, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Property taxes across Nebraska grew at lowest rate in at least a decade, report says
  - ✓ January 20, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Many Douglas County property owners likely to see valuations go up this year – some by significant margins
  - ✓ January 25, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, City, County say they'll work to cut property tax rates
  - ✓ January 25, 2017, Burt County Plaindealer article, Trail gets NGPC nod for \$250K
  - ✓ January 27, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Douglas County officials want home valuation hikes capped at 3 percent
  - ✓ February 1, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Pressure builds on Douglas County assessor to roll back 2017 property valuations that have shocked homeowners
  - ✓ February 6, 2017, Lincoln Journal Star article, Senators urged to develop climate change plan

- ✓ February 7, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Cass County banker Robert Clements appointed to seat left open with Kintner's resignation
- ✓ February 8, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Sarpy County Board looks for successor to longtime administrator
- ✓ February 8, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Douglas County assessor says 2 ideas for reducing proposed property valuation hikes are unworkable but 2 others are options

## **January 2017 Information/Education Report**

### **Information**

- Continued work on updated web site. Board of Directors page update in progress
- Continued work on updates for Chalco Hills Visitors Center Exhibit
- Distributed news releases
- Responded to several requests for information/materials received through web site contacts
- Monitored local media coverage of NRD-related stories
- Began planning for Winter, 2017 Spectrum Newsletter
- Ordered materials for 2017 Omaha Boat Sports and Travel show booth
- Promoted Celebrate Trees program
- Ordered and received 2017 Wildflower seed packets
- Began work on promotion of district-wide NDEQ/NRD 319 Water Quality Management Plan public meetings in Omaha and Blair

### **Education**

#### **January Programming Schedule:**

- 1/5- Sandoz Nature Club- Recycling- 36 students (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 1/6- Premier Academy- Animals- 26 people (pre-K)
- 1/11- Picotte Elementary- Lizards- 18 students (1<sup>st</sup> grade)
- 1/12- Sandoz Nature Club-Recycling- 41 students (K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 1/13- Westgate Elementary- Wildlife Wonders- 4 programs- 128 students (K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 1/17- Elkhorn Ridge Middle– Owls- 19 students
- 1/18- Mary Our Queen– Surfacewater- 3 programs- 66 students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 1/19- Elkhorn Middle- Wildlife Wonders- 12 students
- 1/23- Valley Boy Scout Troop- Owls- 45 people
- 1/24- Crestridge Elementary- Surface water- 2 programs- 41 students (5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 1/24- Cottonwood Elementary-Winter Nature Art-2 programs-55 students (5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 1/25- La Vista Middle– Pollinators- 15 students
- 1/26- Spring Lake Elementary- Owls- 3 programs- 148 students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 1/30- Pine Creek Elementary-Recycling- 3 programs- 54 students (4<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 1/31- Parkview Elementary– Wildlife Wonders- 2 programs- 35 students (pre-K)
- 1/31- Cottonwood Elementary-Winter Nature Art-2 programs – 55 students (5<sup>th</sup> grade)

### **Planning:**

Updates/Monitoring of Papio-Missouri River NRD Facebook/Twitter/Google+/Instagram Sites and Web Pages  
General NRD Animal Care  
Outdoor Classroom Grants  
Assist with Press Releases and Press Statements  
Spring Program Planning  
Regional Envirothon Prep

### **Trail Tales** Reptilian Hibernation Final Draft, NGPC Publication

Continued working with WBS to get another education owl  
Sponsorships of DU/WTF/PF banquets  
Raffle Donations for ESU #3, and Master Naturalist

### **Meetings/Trainings:**

Social Media Training  
Health, Safety, and Wellness Committee Meeting  
I&E Meeting (Lincoln, NE)  
NE Rain training  
Website training

## January, 2017

\$14,197.68

Updated: January 17, 2017

## **Current and On-Going Projects P-MRNRD Legal Counsel**

★ = Top Priority

F = Future Work – No Assignment

N = New Assignment

O = Others Handling

W = Work in Progress

P = Counsel Portion Completed

B = Next Board Meeting

- **Little Papio:** (Cleveland)
  - **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
    - ★ Master Tune Sign License Enforcement (P)
- **West Branch:** (Cleveland)
  - ★ Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96<sup>th</sup> St.) (P)
- **Western Sarpy Dike:** (Cleveland/Petermann)
  - NRDs/NE-ARNG Interlocal for Camp Ashland Property (F)
- **Floodway Purchase Program:** (Laster/Grint)
  - Arlington Purchase Agreements, Deeds, etc. (F)
- **Trail Projects:** (Williams)
  - West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Potential Tyson Access License Agreement (F)
  - West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Qwest LLC License Agreement Potential Termination (F)
  - ★ Fix It Stations O&M Agreement with Omaha Bikes (B)
- **Missouri River Corridor Project:** (Becic)

- **USDA PL 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed:** (Schumacher/Cleveland)
  - ★ Papio W-3 Eminent Domain (Camden) (W)
  - Papio PL 566 Site W-2 Issues (F)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:** (Grint/Laster/Williams)
  - ★ ROW Acquisition Documents for WP6 & WP7 (F)
  - ★ Transfer Deed to City of Omaha for Zorinsky Basin 1 (P)
  - ★ City of Omaha Interlocal Agreement for ZB-2 (W)
  - ★ WP6 & WP7 Interlocal Agreement with Papillion and Sarpy Co. (W)
  - ★ Purchase Agreements and ROW Documents for Z-B2 (N)
  - ★ Papio PL566 Site 21 Easement Vacation for WP-7 Project (B)
  - ★ City of Omaha Interlocal Agreement Amendment No. 2 for DS-15A (B)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Grint)
- **Southern Sarpy Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Laster)
  - ★ Professional Services Contract with FYRA for SSWP Watershed Management Plan (B)
- **Missouri River R-613 and R-616 Levees:** (Cleveland/Woodward)
  - Offutt AFB Culvert O&M Agreement (W)
  - ★ ROW Acquisition Documents (W)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Nelson)
  - ★ WCRW Eriksen Construction Contract Change Order, greater than 10% (B)
- **Other:**
  - ★ Lower Platte River Basin Coalition Interlocal Agreement Amendment (W) (Woodward)
  - ★ Union Dike Indemnification Agreement with NEBCO (B) (Cleveland)

**From:** Pamela Walsh <[pwalsh844@gmail.com](mailto:pwalsh844@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** January 31, 2017 at 10:15:45 AM PST  
**To:** Tony Hakimian <[tony@autoglassnow.com](mailto:tony@autoglassnow.com)>  
**Subject:** Auto Glass Now Progress Photo



# **PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**

## **MEETING MINUTES**



### **Partnership Meeting January 26, 2017 – 10:00 AM – Board Room Natural Resource Center, 8901 S 154<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, NE**

#### Attendants:

See attached sign-in sheet.

#### Purpose

A meeting of the Partnership was held on the above date in order to discuss topics stated in the attached agenda. The meeting began at 10:08 am.

#### **1. Introductions**

- An agenda and handouts were distributed. Marlin Petermann facilitated introductions.

#### **2. Stormwater Funding**

- Nina Cudahy stated that the Unicameral Appropriations Committee is proposing to eliminate or reduce stormwater funding established by Legislative Bill 1226. At this time it is unclear what the exact level of funding will be.
- Amanda Grint will follow up with the District's lobbyist to try to clarify what the committee is proposing.
- PCWP communities have sent letters to request that these funds remain.
- John Kottmann stated that La Vista currently gets about \$10,000 in funding and that it is used to pay PCWP member dues.
- Nina Cudahy stated that Omaha uses the funds for demonstration projects and education/outreach. These projects will have to be eliminated in the future if funding is cut.

#### **3. Vote – USACE Stream Degradation Study**

- Marlin Petermann noted that there are a number of eroding channels in the Papillion Creek Watershed and although the 319 Water Quality Plan is working toward identifying those areas, more can be done on this issue. Funding from 319 is decreasing and so other avenues should be pursued to study the stream degradation issues and solutions. Marlin and Jim Theiler with the City of Omaha met with the USACE to see if their Section 22 Program could help study and identify areas of concern and ultimately provide financial assistance in repairs. This program provides 50% of the funding from USACE with the other 50% coming from





the project sponsor. Marlin noted that the study could take about 2 years and initially, the USACE would like a letter of intent from the local partners.

- The plan prepared by USACE would cover the entire Papio watershed in Douglas and Sarpy Counties and the areas draining directly to the Missouri River. The data in the plan could be used by any of the communities to seek further funding opportunities from USACE through programs for streambank protection.
- The total project cost is estimated to be \$200,000. Omaha and the NRD will each provide \$25,000 of the local match. Because this plan will cover all PCWP members, Omaha and the NRD are requesting that the PCWP contribute the remaining \$50,000 over two years.
- Lori Laster reviewed the projected income and expenses of the PCWP through Fiscal Year 2019 which is when the current Interlocal Agreement will expire. With all current projects and an expected \$150,000 to update the implementation plan to prepare for the next interlocal agreement, the PCWP fund would have a remaining balance of \$13,190.
- Roll call vote was taken. 6 votes yea, 0 votes nay, with Gretna, Ralston, and Sarpy County representatives absent.

#### 4. MS4 Permit Update

- Amanda Grint gave a brief overview of the December meeting where NDEQ discussed the progress of the sMS4 permit.
- NDEQ has stated they sent the new draft permit to EPA for review and comment. A draft permit is expected by mid-February.
- Nina Cudahy indicated Omaha has not yet seen their draft permit.
- The goal is to have all PCWP members covered by a similar permit however NDEQ has indicated they would like to have all sMS4 communities covered by one permit. The draft permit previously presented did not take into account the established PCWP programs and policies.
- Amanda will follow up with NDEQ on Omaha's draft permit and getting the other communities on a permit different from the rest of the state's sMS4 communities.

#### 5. Papillion Creek Watershed Regional Detention Sites WP1, WP2, WP4, DS7, DS12, & DS19 RFP

- The NRD has met with several developers who are proposing developments near these 6 regional basin sites. The only data available on these sites are conceptual design plans and they are not sufficient to determine what the potential land acquisition limits will be.
- Because the NRD received funding for WP6 and WP7 through the State Water Sustainability Fund, previously budgeted money is available to develop better plans for these sites.
- The NRD is soliciting proposal for consultants to develop preliminary design plans for each site. Each site will have 60% design plans to identify the land acquisition limits for each project. These design plans will also be ready in the event other grant opportunities present themselves.
- The implementation plan developed through the PCWP will still determine the order of construction of the sites.

#### 6. Other Items

- The annual Sediment and Erosion Control Seminar will be on February 2, 2017 at the Ralston Arena.

- The Spring Stormwater Symposium hosted by UNL Extension, IECA Great Rivers Chapter, and NeFSMA will be March 8, 2017 at the Scott Conference Center.

#### 5. Next Meeting Date

- The next meeting will be held February 23, 2017 at 10am at the NRC building.

#### 6. Adjourn

- An agenda and the handouts passed out at the meeting are available upon request.

Please contact Lori Laster at 444-6222 regarding any questions or comments concerning these meeting minutes.

**PAPILLION CREEK  
WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**



**SIGN-IN SHEET**

**Partnership Meeting  
January 26, 2017– 10:00 AM– Board Room  
Natural Resources Center, 8901 S 154<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, NE  
(Please Print)**

	NAME & EMPLOYER	MAILING ADDRESS STREET - CITY/ZIP	TELEPHONE & EMAIL ADDRESS
X	Lori Laster P-MRNRD	8901 S. 154 <sup>th</sup> Street Omaha, NE 68138	(402) 444-6222 llaster@papiopartnership.org
X	Amanda Grint P-MRNRD	8901 S. 154 <sup>th</sup> Street Omaha, NE 68138	(402) 444-6222 agrint@papiopartnership.org
X	Marlin Petermann P-MRNRD	8901 S. 154 <sup>th</sup> Street Omaha, NE 68138	(402) 444-6222 mpetermann@papiopartnership.org
✓	Nina Cudahy Omaha Public Works	5600 S. 10 <sup>th</sup> St. Omaha, NE 68107	(402) 444-3915 ncudahy@ci.omaha.ne.us
	Selma Kessler Omaha Public Works	5600 S. 10 <sup>th</sup> St. Omaha, NE 68107	(402) 444-3915 skessler@ci.omaha.ne.us
JK	Jim Kee Omaha Public Works	5600 S. 10 <sup>th</sup> St. Omaha, NE 68107	(402) 444-3915 jkee@ci.omaha.ne.us
	Bruce Fountain Sarpy County	1210 Golden Gate Dr. Papillion, NE	(402) 593-1555 bfountain@sarpy.com
	Donna Lynam Sarpy County	1210 Golden Gate Dr. Papillion, NE	(402) 593-1555 dlynam@sarpy.com
SK	Scott Kardell Boys Town	355 McBreen Circle Boys Town, NE 68010	(402) 498-1135 scott.kardell@boystown.org
KE	Mark Stursma City of Papillion	122 E. Third St. Papillion, NE 68046	(402) 597-2060 mstursma@papillion.org
	Jeff Thompson City of Papillion	122 E. Third St. Papillion, NE 68046	(402) 898-9092 jefft@papillion.org
JK	John Kottmann City of La Vista	8116 Park View Blvd. La Vista, NE 68128	(402) 331-4343 jkottmann@cityoflavista.org
✓	Chris Solberg City of La Vista	8116 Park View Blvd. La Vista, NE 68128	(402) 331-4343 csolberg@cityoflavista.org
	Joe Soucie City of La Vista	8116 Park View Blvd. La Vista, NE 68128	(402) 331-4343 jsoucie@cityoflavista.org
	Dan Freshman City of Ralston	8220 Serum Ave. Ralston, NE 68127	(402) 331-4118 dfreshman@cityofralston.com
	Jerry Chancellor City of Ralston	8220 Serum Ave. Ralston, NE 68127	(402) 331-4118 jchancellor@cityofralston.com
✓	Chris Shewchuk City of Bellevue	1510 Wall Street Bellevue, NE 68005	(402) 293-3032 chris.shewchuk@bellevue.net
	Tammi Palm City of Bellevue		

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File: 535 "PCWP"

**PARTNERS**

**Bellevue Boys Town Gretna La Vista Omaha Papillion Ralston Sarpy County Papio-Missouri River NRD**

**PAPILLION CREEK  
WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**



**SIGN-IN SHEET**

**Partnership Meeting  
January 26, 2017– 10:00 AM– Board Room  
Natural Resources Center, 8901 S 154<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, NE  
(Please Print)**

	Jeff Roberts City of Bellevue		
	Kris Faris City of Gretna	204 N. McKenna Gretna, NE 68028	kris@cityofgretna.com
	Dan Giittinger City of Gretna	204 N. McKenna Gretna, NE 68028	daniel@cityofgretna.com
	Steve Perry City of Gretna		
✓	Andy Szatko City of Omaha	5600 S. 10th St. Omaha, NE 68107	andy.szatko@cityofomaha.org
✓	Matt Knight City of Bellevue	1510 Wall Street Bellevue, NE 68005	Matt.knight@bellevue.net
X	Eric Williams NRD		
✓	Scott KARDOLL Boys Town		
✓	Brittini Stephens-Yates CH2M		Brittini.Stephens-Yates @ ch2m.com

**PAPILLION CREEK  
WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**



**Record of Vote  
January 26, 2017 - 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM – Board Room  
Natural Resources Center, 8901 S. 154<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, NE**

**Vote to Contribute \$50,000 from Partnership Fund to USACE Stream  
Degradation Study**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Voting Representative</b>	<b>Vote</b>
<b>Bellevue</b>	<b>Chris Shewchuk</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Boys Town</b>	<b>Scott Kardell</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Gretna</b>		
<b>La Vista</b>	<b>John Kottmann</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Omaha</b>	<b>Nina Cudahy</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Papillion</b>	<b>Mark Stursma</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ralston</b>		
<b>Sarpy County</b>		
<b>P-MRNRD</b>	<b>Marlin Petermann</b>	<b>Yes</b>



# NRD connecting Lakeland Estates Water Co. to new source

- Katie Rohman
- Jan 12, 2017 Updated Jan 12, 2017

Lakeland Estates Water Co. (LEWC)'s more than 500 customers will finally have access to a better quality water and a more reliable well system.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District is in the process of connecting LEWC to the Washington County Rural Water System (WCRWS), which the PMNRD owns and operates. Water from the WCRWS will replace water obtained by the LEWC from four wells that system owns.

Zach Nelson, project manager with the PMNRD, told the Enterprise on Wednesday that it could take a few days to "dial in the exact water pressure."

"In the interim, water pressure may drop within the Lakeland Estates Water Company's system," he said.

The WCRWS will serve the LEWC as a single customer; it is not taking over ownership. The LEWC will be responsible for all pressure and water quality issues in its system. For example, if a pipe breaks in the system, customers need to call the LEWC, not the PMNRD. The LEWC will continue to bill its customers as well.

In September, the PMNRD Board of Directors approved financing for the construction of the \$490,000 connection from the LEWC to the WCRWS, called the "Lakeland Connection Project."

The LEWC will pay a \$140,000 connection fee. The PMNRD will pay \$181,125 to reimburse Washington County for its original contribution to the construction of the WCRWS. Other Lakeland Connection Project costs will be financed by a \$350,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan at an interest rate of 2.75 percent over 20 years.

# Enterprise Newspaper

## Merle Andersen, 89

• Jan 16, 2017



Merle Andersen,

Merle Charles Andersen, age 89, died Sunday, January 15, 2017. He was born August 19th, 1927, at the family farm of his parents, Rosie (Carlson) and Torvel Andersen. He was baptized November 6th, 1927, at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Kennard, Nebraska, and was confirmed there on June 16th, 1940. Merle attended school in Kennard and graduated from Kennard High School in 1944. Merle married Mardelle Elaine Kahnk on June 30th, 1946, and the couple were blessed with four children.

Merle began by farming with his father and also worked part-time for August Matzen, where he did custom spraying, picking, and drove truck. He purchased his first farm from Auggie in 1961 where they began their farming career raising crops, livestock, and their family. Merle and Mardelle farmed in Washington County for over 70 years east of Kennard. He served on the Kennard School Board, was a member of the Washington County Cattlemen, **as well as the Papio-Missouri NRD**. Merle and Mardelle had the opportunity to travel to Brazil with an NRD group where they were able to experience South American agriculture. They loved to travel and took several other trips with friends during the winter months to Las Vegas, California, Hawaii, as well as visiting their daughter, Nancy, in Ohio. He farmed full-time until he was 70 years old and continued to help on the farm with his son, Tim, and grandson, Jarett, until his passing. His passion and love of the farm was never-ending. To Merle, farming wasn't just a job — it was a way of life.

Merle is survived by his wife, Mardelle, of 70 years; daughter, Nancy (Chuck) Elvers, of Perrysburg, Ohio; son, Tom (Bev) Andersen, of Blair; son, Tim (Kim) Andersen, of Blair; 12 grandchildren; and 23 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Torvel and Rosie Andersen; son, Terry Andersen; grandson, Mark Andersen; and sisters, Evelyn Wulf and Phyllis Suverkrubbe.

Funeral services will be held at 10:30 AM on Thursday at First Lutheran Church in Blair, followed by burial at the Kennard Cemetery. Visitation will be held Wednesday at Campbell Aman Funeral Home with family receiving friends from 6-8 PM.

Memorials may be directed to the Kennard Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department in Merle's name.

# Property taxes across Nebraska grew at lowest rate in at least a decade, report says

- By Martha Stoddard / World-Herald Bureau/Jan 17, 2017

LINCOLN — Property taxes across Nebraska last year grew by the lowest rate in at least a decade, according to a new state report.

The Nebraska Department of Revenue report, released Friday, shows that total property taxes rose 3.26 percent in 2016, compared to their level the year before.

That means \$123 million added to the \$3.781 billion previously going to support schools and other local governments across the state.

The new report comes out as demands for property tax reductions are increasing.

Trent Fellers, executive director of Reform for Nebraska's Future, said the relatively small increase was good news but it doesn't alter the group's call for property tax reduction.

"Property taxes are still the largest and fastest growing source of revenue paid by Nebraskans," he said. "Nebraska has an over reliance on property taxes and the reality remains that total property taxes levied over the last 10 years are still up 60 percent."

Farm groups, as well as the coalition of agricultural, business and homeowner representatives that Fellers leads, want to "rebalance" the state tax structure so that property taxes carry less of the load.

They have proposed cutting property taxes by increasing sales tax revenues.

Gov. Pete Ricketts, who opposes increasing sales or other taxes, has offered a more modest proposal.

He would change how farm and ranch land is valued for property tax purposes.

In the new report, Ruth Sorensen, the state property tax administrator, noted that actions of local governments determine property tax levels.

Valuations are set by county assessors, while tax levies are set by the local government entities based on their spending.

Whether looking at percentage change or actual dollars, the 2016 property tax increase was the smallest since 2006, the report showed.

The largest increase in the decade was just a year earlier, when 2015 property taxes grew by 6.07 percent — or \$216 million.

The report attributed half of the 2016 property tax increase, or \$62 million, to higher tax bills on existing property. The increases resulted from levy hikes, higher valuations or both.

An additional \$44 million, or 36 percent of the increase, was attributed to newly built or improved property.

Bond issues accounted for the last \$17 million, or 14 percent of the increase. Bonds generally are subject to approval by voters.

But property tax changes varied considerably from county to county.



In Kimball County, total property taxes dropped 5.35 percent from 2015 to last year. On the other end of the spectrum, property taxes in Arthur County increased 16.47 percent.

But the biggest increase in the tax levy occurred in Adams County, where it went from 1.4145 percent to 1.5009 percent. Most counties lowered their levies as valuations increased.

The highest average levy was the 2.3000 percent in Douglas County, followed by the 2.2945 percent in Sarpy County.

The lowest levy was the 0.7613 percent in Grant County.

Ag land valuations, meanwhile, showed definite signs of moderating, after years of steep increases.

The new report showed that ag land valuations increased 6.24 percent in 2016, compared to the peak increase of 29.43 percent in 2014.

Residential valuations, meanwhile, appeared to be rebounding from the recession years. They grew 4.06 percent last year, the highest rate since 2007.

*martha.stoddard@owh.com, 402-473-9583*

[http://www.omaha.com/news/nebraska/property-taxes-across-nebraska-grew-at-lowest-rate-in-at/article\\_7410653d-14f2-5c6f-bdc9-455e8681f5de.html](http://www.omaha.com/news/nebraska/property-taxes-across-nebraska-grew-at-lowest-rate-in-at/article_7410653d-14f2-5c6f-bdc9-455e8681f5de.html)

# Many Douglas County property owners likely to see valuations go up this year — some by significant margins

- By Christopher Burbach / World-Herald staff writer
- 
- Jan 20, 2017

A lot of property owners in Douglas County are likely to see their valuations go up this year, some by significant amounts, based on preliminary 2017 valuations posted by the Douglas County Assessor's Office.

Douglas County's total taxable valuation would increase by about 8.5 percent, said Diane Battiato, Douglas County's assessor/register of deeds.

That's even after last year's state-mandated increase of 7 percent on residential properties in a large swath of central and west Omaha.

Some of those homeowners will see increases again this year, Battiato said.

"I'm sure there is some sticker shock," Battiato said.

There is, and Douglas County Board members are hearing about it. Mike Boyle said he and at least two fellow board members were receiving calls from taxpayers about the assessments.

The callers are upset about the increases. They're confused about why the land portion of their valuations went up so much. Property owners' valuations are made up of two parts: the land and improvements, such as houses. The preliminary valuations for land on some properties went up by tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, while the assessed value of improvements in some cases stayed the same or decreased.

Boyle said he spoke Thursday with Jack Baines, chief field deputy in the Douglas County Assessor's Office.

Boyle said Baines told him that the office had not properly valued land for many years.

"I don't understand the rationale," Boyle said.

He said the County Board may delve into the matter when it next meets, at 9 a.m. Tuesday.

In an interview, Battiato attributed the valuation increases to two factors: a hot local real estate market, and some properties not being reassessed for tax purposes for several years.

A higher valuation probably means a higher tax bill, although the valuation is only one part of what determines a property owner's taxes. The other part is tax levies, set by an area's governing bodies.

State law requires assessors in Douglas, Sarpy and Lancaster Counties to post preliminary valuations in January of each year to give a property owner a chance for an informal hearing with an appraiser.

The 2017 preliminary valuations are posted on the websites of the Douglas County Assessor's Office and Sarpy County Assessor's Office.

Battiato encouraged property owners to check their preliminary valuations. If they believe the county got it wrong or if they just have questions, she urged them to schedule an informal hearing with an appraiser from her office.

In Sarpy County, the average residential increase would be 3.67 percent, County Assessor Dan Pittman said.

Sarpy County is still working with an outside contractor to get preliminary commercial values and working with the state for preliminary agricultural land values.

Pittman said his office hadn't gotten a lot of calls from residents wanting informal hearings about preliminary values. Pittman said his office has been getting more calls about last year's tax statements, which went out at the end of December.

In Douglas County, Battiato has set up a phone bank of staffers in her office to take phone calls for appointments.

She said the office received about 30 calls Tuesday, the first day people could call for appointments. She didn't know how many had come in Wednesday or Thursday.

"It's been busy, but it hasn't been overwhelming," Battiato said.

She said she didn't know yet how many properties had gone up and how many had gone down. Nor could she specify areas of the county where increases were particularly prevalent or large. She said changes were made countywide.

It's likely that many homeowners whose valuations were increased by the state mandate in 2016 will see additional increases from the county this year.

State law requires county assessors to assess properties at 92 to 100 percent of their market value and to make sure taxpayers' valuations are fair compared with others' valuations.

If the counties don't do that, the state steps in through the Tax Equalization and Review Commission and orders blanket changes.

"We witnessed that this past June, when the state overrode us," Battiato said. "The problem with that is that if we don't do our job and keep up with the market trends, as we witnessed, the state is going to do it for us."

But when the state gets involved it has to order across-the-board changes for large areas, she said, and that throws some property valuations out of whack.

Douglas County sued the Tax Equalization and Review Commission over its 2016 mandated changes: a 7 percent increase for about 75,000 properties in west and central Omaha, and an 8 percent decrease for about 20,000 properties in north Omaha. The matter is pending before the Nebraska Supreme Court.

"We're doing the job by state mandate that should have been done ongoing," said Battiato, who took over the Assessor's Office in 2015. "I firmly understand that it would be much better to have small increases than a sticker-shock increase. But if we don't get property values aligned, the state's going to do it for us."

The County Assessor's Office will set final values in late May. Anyone who disagrees with those can file formal protest and go to the County Board of Equalization in June.

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# City, county say they'll work to cut property tax rates

- By Christopher Burbach / World-Herald staff writer/January 25, 2017

Douglas County Board Chairwoman Mary Ann Borgeson and Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert said they would pursue cuts to the property tax rate if startlingly high preliminary property valuations become reality.

Stothert said she would most likely propose at least a 2 percent cut in the city's tax levy, if current valuations and revenue projections hold. Borgeson said reducing the tax levy would be at the top of the County Board's list, if valuations remain as high as projected. She said she couldn't specify a number yet, because the valuation numbers are likely to change as taxpayers appeal.

Of course, the city and county are only two of the government entities that collect property taxes in Omaha. But even if all of the taxing bodies, including school districts, reduced their tax levies, it wouldn't be enough to offset large valuation increases. Many taxpayers would still be hit with significantly higher property tax bills next year.

Borgeson acknowledged that during Tuesday's Douglas County Board meeting, at which she invited taxpayers and the Douglas County Assessor's Office to discuss the issue.

Homeowners gave the board and County Assessor/Register of Deeds Diane Battiato an earful about preliminary 2017 property valuations that most likely would lead to large tax increases.

The County Board had put the issue on Tuesday's agenda amid complaints from taxpayers about the recently posted valuations.

Under the new, preliminary assessments, the total valuation of property in Douglas County would rise by 8.25 percent. In some areas of far west Omaha, valuations would increase by more than 20 percent. Some homeowners in various parts of the city would see their valuations double or more.

Nineteen taxpayers lined up to decry the Assessor's Office's valuations. Homeowner Michael Moran, who lives in Linden Estates near 139th and Charles Streets, has seen his valuation go up 25 percent since 2015. He said he protested his 2016 assessment and the county stuck with that valuation in August — then raised it by another \$112,000 in 2017. It now stands at \$757,900.

"I'm willing to pay my fair share, but I am not going to be hijacked by these types of situations," Moran said.

Retiree Pam Curry said she worries that people on fixed incomes in her Peony Park neighborhood will be forced out of their homes by higher taxes. She said people in her part of town are angry.

A homeowner from the Ginger Cove area in western Douglas County, accompanied by nine fellow taxpayers from his neighborhood, said the land value on 90 percent of Ginger Cove lots had gone up 200 to 300 percent.

Doug Kagan, president of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom, called the valuation system "a festering sore that never heals."

Battiato told the board that two factors are driving the increases. She said many properties had not been reappraised by the Assessor's Office for many years. And she said a hot real estate market has been driving up the value of homes.

Nebraska law requires county assessors to set property valuations at 92 to 100 percent of market value and to ensure that properties are assessed equally.

Battiato, who took over the Assessor's Office in 2015, said she realizes that the large increases are shocking to taxpayers. She said her staff will look into the individual issues raised Tuesday. She urged people who believe their valuation is wrong to schedule an appointment to meet with a county appraiser.

Battiato also said she's "considering options" to lessen the impact. She said that included talking with state tax equalization officials.

That said, she and her chief field deputy, Jack Baines, said they thought their valuations are generally correct.

"We have been inundated with calls because there are a lot of very upset people," Battiato said. "But the numbers don't lie to us."

Valuation increases probably will mean higher property taxes. But they're only one part of what determines a tax bill. The other is the levy set by each governing body: city councils, school districts and county boards and the like.

Stothert's opponent in this spring's mayoral election, Heath Mello, issued a statement saying he would push for a property tax reduction.

Stothert said she was told that the total valuation across the city would rise 5.8 percent. That would raise city revenue about \$8.5 million, she said. A 2 percent property tax cut would amount to about \$3.2 million, she said.

At the County Board meeting, Borgeson said it's not right, even if the valuations match the market, to raise them all at once.

"This is not reality in terms of taxpayers being able to pay their taxes," Borgeson said. "It's ludicrous."

She said Nebraska's tax equalization system has never worked "and it never will."

Borgeson urged Battiato to ask the Nebraska Department of Revenue if the county could at least spread the valuation increases out over a number of years, if they prove to be accurate.

Battiato said that she would talk with the state and that she and her staff were considering options to lessen the pain.

County Board Member Jim Cavanaugh called the valuation hikes "seriously out of whack."

"I don't think 300 percent increases are justified," Cavanaugh said.

County Board Member P.J. Morgan, a longtime real estate executive, called the valuations "terribly inconsistent."

Battiato said her office had to develop a new market-based method of appraising valuations because they were out of line.

In 2016, the Nebraska Tax Equalization and Review Commission ordered the county to increase valuations by 7 percent across the board on about 75,000 residential properties in central and west Omaha.

Battiato said the 2017 valuations, while difficult to absorb, accurately reflect the rising real estate market.

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# Trail gets NGPC nod for \$250K

Burt County Plaindealer/1-25-17



The Tiger Trail Loop project took a big step toward completion Friday.

During its Jan. 20 meeting in Lincoln, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission approved \$250,000 in federal funding for the project through the Recreational Trails Program. The grant is expected to fund a 4,400-foot long concrete loop trail in Memorial Park.

Tiger Trail is Phase 1 of what could expand to be a five-phase project, building a loop that encircles Memorial Park.

Financial plans detailing engineering, utility relocation and construction costs totaling \$323,656 were presented to the city council in August. **Funding sources to cover those costs called for \$250,000 in federal funding, \$36,828 from the Papio Missouri Natural Resources District and \$36,828 from the City of Tekamah.** One of the projects organizers, Linda Shada, told the council then that she projects only \$5,000 coming from taxpayer funds. That money would be used for engineering fees.

Shada said Monday that all the funding has been committed. The next step is finalizing the route which requires input from Tekamah-Herman Schools and the Tekamah Ball Association.

She said the trail committee wants to work out a project that suits the association's needs, too.

'We don't want to be in the way of any future development they've got planned,' she said. 'The trail can be a great addition to the park. We want to make sure we do this right.'

If the project stays on schedule, Phase I could be complete late in the summer of 2018.

She said the committee is still working on additional grants and donations to possibly eliminate the burden on city taxpayers. She said the original budget does not allow for what she called 'personal touches,' such as lighting and activity stops along the trail.

[http://www.midwestmessenger.com/burt\\_county/news/trail-gets-ngpc-nod-for-k/article\\_ce916cee-e279-11e6-abad-cfa6281127dc.html](http://www.midwestmessenger.com/burt_county/news/trail-gets-ngpc-nod-for-k/article_ce916cee-e279-11e6-abad-cfa6281127dc.html)

# Douglas County officials want home valuation hikes capped at 3 percent

- By Christopher Burbach /Omaha World-Herald staff writer/ January 27, 2017

Three Douglas County Board members plan to formally ask County Assessor Diane Battiato to set 2017 property valuations so nobody's house valuation goes up more than 3 percent.

A nonbinding resolution to that effect is likely to be on the board's agenda for its regular meeting Tuesday, County Board Chair Mary Ann Borgeson said.

She's co-sponsoring it with board members P.J. Morgan and Mike Boyle.

Borgeson acknowledged that the board can't tell the assessor how to set valuations, and that going along with their resolution could put the county at odds with the State of Nebraska. But she said she hopes the county can negotiate with state tax equalization officials to spread increases out over a number of years instead of slamming some taxpayers with huge increases this year.

The move comes amid controversy about large increases proposed in the Douglas County Assessor's recently posted preliminary property valuations. They're likely to lead to large property tax increases for thousands of homeowners.

"We're going to strongly recommend that the assessor, Diane Battiato, redo the residential valuations so that they not exceed 3 percent," Morgan said.

The resolution was still being drafted Thursday.

"By law, we don't have the authority over another elected official," Borgeson said. "We can encourage, strongly encourage, but it's up to her whether to work with us on it or not."

Battiato could not immediately be reached for comment. She has acknowledged the sticker shock the preliminary valuations are causing to property owners, but said that the appraisals are largely correct. Battiato has said a rising real estate market is pushing values higher. And she said many properties had not been reappraised by the Assessor's Office for many years.

Battiato is required by Nebraska law to set valuations at 92 to 100 percent of market value. If she fails to do so, she has said, the state could order across-the-board increases, as it did in 2016.

Taxpayers can seek an informal hearing with an appraiser from Battiato's office if they believe their valuation is too high. People can call 402-444-6734 by Feb. 10 to set up an appointment, or they can email or mail in information to the Assessor's Office about their properties until Feb. 28. Taxpayers also will have the opportunity to file formal protests in June if they disagree with the final valuations the County Assessor's Office sets in May.

Borgeson said this week that she recognizes that Battiato is in a difficult position. Asked whether the board resolution is posturing meant to put Battiato on the spot, Borgeson said: "We're not doing this as an in-your-face kind of thing. We're doing this because we've heard from the taxpayers."

Morgan said he has received more than 100 calls and emails from upset taxpayers over the past week. Many complained about valuation increases, some more than twice their 2016 valuations.

A longtime real estate executive, Morgan said he had checked out the properties and records of several people who called him, and he doubts the accuracy of the valuations. He said several have since been lowered significantly after being brought to the Assessor's Office's attention.

Morgan cited a house near 90th and William Streets. He said the preliminary valuation for 2017 was about \$488,000 — nearly 2½ times the valuation in 2016, with most of the increase based on land value. It has since been reduced to \$387,000.

"The reason for (the resolution) is the hardship that 60 percent to 100 percent increases would cause on taxpayers — and the inconsistency," Morgan said.

Borgeson acknowledged that if Battiato were to cap increases at 3 percent, the county's valuations might not pass muster with the Nebraska Tax Equalization and Review Commission.

"Say she agrees to do it," Borgeson said. "The state could come in and do the same thing they did last year."

In 2016, the state ordered 7 percent across-the-board valuation hikes for more than 75,000 residential properties in Douglas County. The state also lowered valuations by 8 percent for a large part of north Omaha.

Borgeson acknowledged that many of the new valuations might accurately reflect market value. She received a call from one taxpayer who said it's been unfair for people to have been under-assessed for years while others have been paying taxes on the market values of their homes.

But Borgeson called some of the increases outrageous and said that, even if they're right, imposing them in one year is wrong.

"The taxpayers shouldn't have to bear the burden of correcting past mistakes in one fell swoop," Borgeson said.

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# Pressure builds on Douglas County assessor to roll back 2017 property valuations that have shocked homeowners

- By Christopher Burbach / World-Herald staff writer/2-1-17

Pressure continues to mount on Douglas County Assessor Diane Battiato to roll back preliminary 2017 property valuations that have Omaha homeowners seeing red.

The Douglas County Board passed a resolution Tuesday asking Battiato to limit homeowners' 2017 property valuation increases to 3 percent.

Also Tuesday, state tax officials, at the governor's request, sent a letter to the county urging that the preliminary valuations be decreased.

Battiato said she will add the board's suggestion to several options she's considering to address large preliminary valuation increases that have shocked taxpayers.

She also said her office is working with the State Property Assessment Division on solutions.

Battiato said she and her staff are working on four or five options. She said she would return to the County Board to discuss them.

The resolution the County Board adopted Tuesday is nonbinding. The board doesn't have the authority to tell the county assessor how to set property valuations.

The vote Tuesday came after more than a dozen upset taxpayers complained at the County Board meeting that the county's preliminary valuations on their homes were wrong.

Battiato and County Board members have been inundated with calls and emails from taxpayers. This is the second week in a row that fired-up homeowners lined up to speak to the County Board.

"The valuations need to come down significantly," said Sheila Karpf, leading a contingent of homeowners from the Sunset Hills neighborhood near 90th and Hickory Streets. "They are unlawful. They are not based on market rates. They are way above market rates."

Karpf, holding a toddler on her hip, told the board that Sunset Hills valuations went up by more than 200 percent from 2016 to 2017.

"That is outrageous," she said. "Everybody is shocked. ... Everybody is angry."

Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert also made a rare appearance before the County Board. She urged the board to pass the 3 percent resolution.

The county had posted the preliminary valuations on its website in mid-January, as required by state law. Taxpayers have until Feb. 10 to schedule an informal hearing with a County Assessor's Office appraiser. They can call 402-444-6734 to make an appointment.

The final valuations are set in May. Taxpayers can file formal protests in June.

County Board Chair Mary Ann Borgeson said she received a call Tuesday morning from Gov. Pete Ricketts, who said a letter from the office of State Tax Commissioner Tony Fulton was on its way.

Borgeson read aloud the letter, signed by Ruth Sorensen, administrator of the Property Assessment Division in the Nebraska Department of Revenue.

The letter noted that state law requires county assessors to set property valuations at 92 to 100 percent of market value.

Battiato has said one reason for the large increases was that many properties had been undervalued for several years and that if she didn't increase the valuations, the state would order increases, as it did in 2016.

But Sorensen's letter said Douglas County's preliminary 2017 valuations put the county as a whole at 99 percent of actual value. So the county could reduce them and still comply with state law, the letter said. It encouraged the county to consider "uniform percentage decreases" to some residential properties in the county.

"This could be done before change notices go out in June to avoid many of the protests that may occur for those residential properties valued at more than 100% of actual value," Sorensen's letter said.

County Board member P.J. Morgan made a motion to pass the resolution asking Battiato to limit increases to 3 percent. Board member Mike Boyle seconded it.

A longtime real estate executive, Morgan said he had looked into numerous taxpayer complaints about huge increases and agreed that they were not in line with market value.

"It's not just that it's outrageous," Morgan said. "It's inaccurate."

The resolution passed 6-1. Clare Duda voted no. He said he hoped the Assessor's Office could "find more reasonable figures." But he said the resolution was meaningless and would mislead the public about who's in charge of valuations.

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# Senators urged to develop climate change plan

- DON WALTON Lincoln Journal Star

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- Feb 6, 2017

- Two dozen Nebraskans joined Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks of Lincoln on Monday in urging state senators to create a task force to develop a strategic plan for Nebraska to prepare for climate change.

"Opportunities exist for the people of Nebraska to respond appropriately to these risks," Pansing Brooks told the Legislative Council's executive board.

And that includes economic opportunities through the development of renewable energy from Nebraska's wind and solar resources along with reduction of pollutants and development of agricultural innovation, she said.

Former Sen. Ken Haar of Malcolm headed the parade of supporters who urged senators to approve LB646, which would create a pests, drought, flood and extreme weather mitigation and preparedness task force to develop a strategic plan.

Climate change presents "a new area of risk, challenges and opportunities," Haar said.

Agriculture, water, health care, energy generation and usage, forestry, transportation, rural and urban communities, all will be impacted by extreme weather and the ongoing challenges of climate change, senators were told.

Average temperatures in Nebraska are expected to rise by four to eight degrees by the end of the 21st century. An increase in severe weather events, including both drought and flooding, is also anticipated.

Soil moisture is expected to decrease by 5 to 10 percent by the end of the century, partly because of reduced snowpack in the Rockies and reduced stream flow in the Platte and Missouri rivers.

"Action now is better than reaction later," Pansing Brooks said.

"Our climate is changing," John Pollack, a retired National Weather Service meteorologist, told the committee. "I've seen the evidence of flooding and drought."

Pollack spoke for the Nebraska chapter of the Sierra Club.

The climate change task force proposal emerged from a carefully constructed legislative study co-chaired by Haar, a Democratic progressive, and Sen. Tyson Larson of O'Neill, a conservative Republican.

With the words "climate change" politically loaded and explosive, the study committee's final report chose to sound an alert, rather than an alarm, about the issue.

Its final recommendations called for creation of "an evidence-based, data-driven climate action plan."

The title of LB646 refers to "extreme weather preparedness."

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# Cass County banker Robert Clements appointed to seat left open with Kintner's resignation

- By Emily Nohr / World-Herald Bureau
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- Feb 7, 2017

LINCOLN — Robert K. Clements, who has a background in finance and deep roots in Cass County, was appointed Monday as the newest member of the Nebraska Legislature.

Gov. Pete Ricketts announced the 66-year-old banker and actuary from Elmwood as his pick to replace former State Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion. Clements will represent the 2nd Legislative District that covers all of Cass County and parts of Sarpy and Otoe Counties.

Clements was not among the 35 people who applied for the seat. Ricketts said his staff made informal phone calls to find the best person and moved quickly so the district was represented while the Nebraska Legislature is in session.

Clements came onto his radar last week, the governor said. The two did not know each other previously.

Ricketts said his applicant pool wasn't limited to the people who applied, calling Clements the "ideal choice" given the state's fiscal situation.

"With his experience, I'm 100 percent comfortable with him being in that role," he said.

Clements took the oath of office from Chief Justice Mike Heavican during a ceremony at the State Capitol on Monday. He was joined by his wife, Peggy, and other family members, including his parents, and a handful of state senators.

Clements said he looks forward to learning a lot and thanked the governor for the opportunity to serve.

"I know the state is facing difficult budget decisions, but I believe my background and experience will be of service during this process," he said.

He was unavailable for questions after the ceremony.

It's unclear why Clements didn't apply for the job, though Ricketts suggested it may have taken someone else pointing out why he'd be good for it.

"Nebraskans are humble people," Ricketts said.

Asked about policy issues on which they might disagree, the governor said he and Clements talked more about the big picture, and that he expects there will be times they disagree.

Clements was described by family and friends as a solid conservative and Christian who has a knack for numbers.

He hasn't served in elective office but is a former Cass County GOP chairman. His son Andy is the county party's vice chair.

Clements grew up in the home of author Bess Streeter Aldrich in Elmwood. He and Peggy Clements have been married for 44 years and were high school sweethearts, both graduating from Elmwood High School.

Clements graduated in 1973 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a math major, with minors in economics and actuarial science. After graduation, he worked as an actuary at Business Men's Assurance Co. in Kansas City, Missouri.

In 1978 he returned to Elmwood to work at the American Exchange Bank, following his father and grandfather, who ran the bank. Clements is the executive vice president of the bank. His twin brother, Rick, is the president of American Exchange Bank. Clements' son Andy is a bank officer.

"He's very good at numbers," Peggy Clements said.

Clements attends Victory Church in north Omaha, said his son Tom. He serves as president of the Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation, is a member of the Sons of the American Legion and is an alumnus of the Cornhusker Marching Band. He plays the trumpet.

Rob and Peggy Clements have five grown children and 10 grandchildren, with another on the way.

Clements' great-great-grandfather John Clements homesteaded in Elmwood in 1868 and was one of the founders of the community when it was incorporated in 1886.

"We in Cass County are real happy it is a Cass Countian," said Craig Buescher, chairman of the Cass County Republican Party. "The majority of the district is made up of Cass County."

Lou Allgayer, a former county party chair and Cass County Board member, said he supports the governor's selection and believes Clements will listen to the people of the district. Clements is Allgayer's banker and is "just a good person," Allgayer said.

Clements succeeds Kintner, who resigned last month following controversies involving his use of a state laptop to engage in cybersex with a woman he met online and his retweet of a Twitter post that appeared to make light of sexual assault.

Clements will finish out Kintner's term. He will be eligible to run for the legislative seat in 2018 and again in 2022.

Kintner on his Facebook page hailed Clements as "an outstanding conservative and a strong Christian."

"He knows the district and his business background will serve the district well," he said. "I have known him for four years, and I have tremendous respect for him. He will be an outstanding senator."

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# Sarpy County Board looks for successor to longtime administrator

- By Emily Nitcher / World-Herald staff writer

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- Feb 8, 2017

- Longtime Sarpy County Administrator Mark Wayne is winding down his tenure, and the county is seeking applicants for his replacement.

Sarpy County Board Chairman Don Kelly said the job will be posted this week. Wayne, who turns 65 this month, has been county administrator since 1991, and his latest contract ends June 30.

Although the contract ends in June, Wayne could continue working for the county beyond that date, County Board members said during Tuesday's meeting.

Board member Jim Thompson said he'd like to see Wayne stay for another year, either extending his contract or working without one.

Even so, Kelly said the county has to plan for the future and that's why the board is seeking applications.

"When somebody like Mark Wayne eventually walks out the door, they take with them so much knowledge and ... a wealth of information, you want to make sure ... there's somebody still behind that can pick up all those pieces and run with them so you have a seamless transition," Kelly said.

The county will not hire a search firm to help with the process.

The minimum qualifications for county administrator include a master's degree in public or business administration, five years of experience in supervising employees and 10 years of experience in management.

In 2016, Wayne had a gross salary of \$134,528.

Sarpy County also has a deputy county administrator. Scott Bovick has held that position for eight years.

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# Douglas County assessor says 2 ideas for reducing proposed property valuation hikes are unworkable but 2 others are options

- By Christopher Burbach / World-Herald staff writer/Feb 8, 2017

Douglas County Assessor Diane Battiato said Tuesday that two County Board ideas for reducing proposed hikes in 2017 property valuations are unworkable but that she's considering at least two other options.

Battiato said she's determined to reduce many of the 2017 preliminary valuation increases that her office posted in January. The valuations, which would mean large hikes for thousands of Omaha taxpayers, threw homeowners and County Board members into an uproar.

The board passed a nonbinding resolution Jan. 31 urging Battiato to limit homeowners' 2017 property valuation increases to 3 percent. The board doesn't have the authority to order her how to set valuations.

Battiato's staff crunched the numbers and went back to the board Tuesday.

She told them the 3 percent cap wouldn't work for two reasons. First, Battiato said it wouldn't meet the State of Nebraska requirement that the county set valuations for property tax purposes at 92 to 100 percent of market value.

An across-the-board increase of 3 percent would put the county's total valuation at only 91.4 percent of market value. And some areas of the county would be at less than 90 percent, Battiato said.

She told the board that would likely result in the state ordering the county to raise valuations.

Second, she contended that capping increases at 3 percent would leave some fast-appreciating homes far below the market now, and cause them to fall further behind in the future.

County Board member Mike Boyle had suggested another solution: rolling 2017 valuations back to 2016 levels.

That would not work, Battiato said. Her office concluded that keeping the valuations the same as last year would put the county overall at less than 89 percent of market value. No area of the county would reach the 92 percent minimum mark, her figures showed.

"Rolling back to 2016 is not even an acceptable amount to send in (to the state)," Battiato said.

She said the state would mandate increases to push the county's total up to 96 percent of market value.

But Battiato said two other suggestions that her office has been working on "are options."

She said she wants to ease the burden while still complying with state law.

One would redo 2017 valuations so the county overall would be at 92 percent of market value.

The other would redo valuations so the county overall would be at 93.5 percent of market value.

It's impossible to say yet how those would affect individual taxpayers.

Either would still result in significant increases for many homeowners.

If the Assessor's Office aims for 93.5 percent, for example, much of west Omaha could see a combined valuation increase of over 14 percent, according to Battiato's figures. Those in other parts of the county would see combined increases of about 1 to 4 percent. Those are just totals. Some property owners' valuations would go up more than those amounts, and some less.

County Board Member P.J. Morgan suggested another option Tuesday: capping increases at 4 percent.

Battiato said she would crunch the numbers on that. But her chief field deputy, Jack Baines, said caps and across-the-board adjustments would lead to greater inequities between taxpayers than would setting target valuation of 92 percent or 93.5 percent for the county.

Battiato must submit 2017 valuations to the state at the end of March.

Taxpayers have until Friday to schedule an informal hearing with a County Assessor's Office appraiser. They can call 402-444-6734 to make an appointment.

Notices will be mailed to property owners in May. Property owners can protest their valuations in June.

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