

Highlights from 2005-2006:

In December of 2004, we opted to take over the forfeiture/foreclosure process on delinquent properties from the State of Michigan. This has resulted in the retention of revenues at the County level, as well as creating an opportunity and the ability for us to provide better customer service to our taxpayers. The following data pertains to this program:

- Forfeiture fees retained at the County as of 9/13/06 (the date this report was created) - \$265,299
- Auction proceeds received for first auction held in July, 2006 - \$103,950
- Excess of auction proceeds over taxes and fees owed - \$65,745
- Net of revenues over expenditures as of 9/13/06 - \$213,570
- We negotiated a five year agreement with a 15% fee reduction for each year for the performance of title searches and various forfeiture/foreclosure duties as required by Michigan Statute. The 15% reduction amounts to \$18 per parcel and will equate to an approximate savings of \$11,000 for the 2006 forfeitures. Future savings will be dependent upon the number of forfeitures that occur each March 1st.
- Estimated forfeiture fees to be retained at the County for the remainder of this cycle, given 505 properties still in forfeiture as of 9/13/06 - \$111,000
- We created and implemented a hardship policy to help taxpayers in desperate situations to stay in their homes. We also devised plans for each of them to payoff the taxes owed so that they may redeem their properties.

We have implemented a policy to allow partial payments on delinquent taxes for properties that are in forfeiture. Prior to 2005, taxpayers were required to pay in full when making a payment on a property in forfeiture. We feel it is easier to send in extra funds as taxpayers have it available rather than to attempt to accumulate it in full.

We have implemented a new tax system for uniformity, County wide. One unit remains on their own tax system, but we anticipate they will convert in 2008. This system allows us to display delinquent tax information over the County website, thus providing convenient customer service for many taxpayers, title companies, and mortgage companies.

We have increased revenues from the investment of idle funds by designing an investment strategy that includes lengthening investment maturities to obtain higher returns. While some of the additional revenue can be attributed to the various increases in interest rates over the last 18 months or so, the extent of our increase would not have been as significant without our new strategy. Additionally, we have approved more institutions for participation in the bidding process, which has lead to greater diversification in institutions, as well as greater diversification by type of investment, to ensure the safety of County funds. With the implementation of our strategy, we have realized a 134% increase in interest revenue for 2005 and 2006.

In Progress:

Many taxpayers have expressed an interest in the ability to pay outstanding bills with credit cards. We are currently in the process of researching this topic and anticipate a policy and system for the acceptance of credit cards will be in place for many of the County departments during 2007.

We have opted to take over the audit of principle residence exemptions from the State of Michigan. This allows the County to retain 70% of the interest earned rather than the 10% we were retaining when the State was performing the audits. We are in the process of reviewing parcel data and will be investigating any discrepancies discovered.