



WISCONSIN REAL PROPERTY LISTERS ASSOCIATION

June 2009

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I believe that all of us have probably had to deal with budgetary issues in recent years and will likely have to do so for the foreseeable future. We will be asked to do more with less and in some cases for less. Our positions as Real Property Listers are greatly impacted by the real estate markets. Our workload is pretty much dictated by how much property is moving and the demand for new housing. With the slowdown some of us may have seen a decrease in workload, but in some cases that has been perhaps offset by staff reductions and when the real estate begins to move once again there will likely be a lag time before more employees are hired to pick up the slack. With tight budgets looming most of us will not likely be seeing much if any increase in take home compensation for what we do. Who knows some of us may be asked to take a vacation in the way of a furlough like the State of Wisconsin Employees. Some of us may end up with additional duties when positions are lost through attrition or even get bumped if we are in a union position. Needless to say our attitudes may be a shade of gray.

A shade of gray would also be a good way to describe state statutes. Ask two people to recite a state statute and you will likely hear the same thing, then ask them what it means and you may get a completely different point of view. I have heard more than once that a well written

law does have gray areas, but sometimes black and white would make things a lot easier. There have been discussions between our organization and other organizations about proposed statutory changes that govern what we do and affect how we and our colleagues in other professions do their jobs as well. We don't always see eye to eye on the details, but I hope that in the future we will all be able to move forward and that any changes will in the long run be beneficial to all.

For those of you who have not heard the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) proposed re-engineering Wisconsin's Property Tax System. They have identified four reasons for doing so. The system is very complex, it has become inequitable, the system is inefficient, and is out of step with the majority of the other state systems. It is proposed that these problems will be addressed by adopting a single-value property tax system. Single Value Assessments are representative of the property's value at a level of 100%. In order to accomplish this, values will be updated annually and therefore the fair market value and equalization will be eliminated. Another component of their proposal involves implementing Unified Assessment Districts. What is a unified assessment district? It is a consolidation of existing assessment districts. At this time the lines have yet to be drawn but the



proposal would reduce the current number of assessment jurisdictions from 1800 to around 100. The overall goals are for the property tax system to be simplified, transparent and automated and much of this will be developed and implemented through IPAS. The proposed transitions are to take place between fiscal years 2009 and 2015. Of course changes may take place so we will have to listen closely and try to stay involved in the process.

On a final note congratulations to Donna Lyon (Green Lake) on her retirement May 14th and good luck to Lori Scully (Juneau) in her future endeavors. Also congratulations to Ted Koch State Cartographer whom will be retiring on July 3rd, 2009.



A GOODBYE FROM SOME FRIENDS

Fellow Real Property Listers

By the time you read this I will be retired. My last day with the County was May 14, after 31½ years. I was the Lister for 9 years coming from the Zoning office and before that the County Clerk's office. I have seen a lot of changes over the years, some of them not for the better. I think Real Property Listers are a vital cog in the wheel of government. As stated by many of you, we have to wear many hats and often times are not truly appreciated for the work we do. I want to thank you for coming to Green Lake County last year for the ASM and I appreciate all of the nice comments on the survey. I will miss the ASM's as I always learned something new from them. I hope the organization continues to be a strong one and it gets the recognition it truly deserves.

I would like to thank the association for the beautiful floral arrangement I received for my retirement. It was great being a member of the RPL association and I will treasure my time with you all. So far, retirement seems like vacation...but better, cause I don't have to go back to work. Donna Lyon

Donna - Green Lake County

PS:

Hi Roxy,

I'm writing this because I'm still receiving Donna Lyon's e-mails. I am the treasurer and we have not been able to replace Donna yet--she retired on May 14th. We had a small gathering in her office for her final day - like an open house all day long. I know she enjoyed the party and the great gifts, and so I thought I'd let you know this bit of news for your newsletter. I'll let you know who will be her replacement as soon as I am able to.

Kathy Morris

Green lake County Treasurer

Belvin G. Bulgrin here from Marathon County,

Well instead of lingering around any longer than I have to and taking up more of your time, I have to express my thankfulness to all the Members of the W. R. P. L. A. for excepting me as a fellow Real Property Lister and friend.

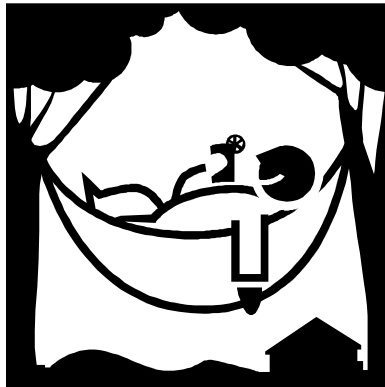
I'm sorry that my time as the Lister with Marathon County was short, and that I didn't become more active with the Association and with the great Leaders of the W. R. P. L. A. I have had many great times, memories and learning experiences with the Listers and the Association.

For all of you that remember me I have enjoyed your friendship and will cherish those memories as long as I can. But as of June the 18th, 2009 I will be retiring from Marathon County Property Description Department with 28 years of service, I will turn 62 years old on the 1st of June but will work until my anniversary date with the county.

So I thank you all you all for your kindness and help through these great years, and I hope to get an invitation to the Banquet night dance with the die-hards like the good ole days.

Thank You:

Belvin G. Bulgrin



District 3 Spring Meeting News – Jeff Bluske, VP

The district meeting was held in Buffalo County at the Courthouse in Alma on Friday, May 8. Top issues of concern included discussion of the Register of Deeds Association Resolution in support of a SS 706.05(1).09 change. The resolution indicated changing the wording “shall be entitled to record” to say “shall be recorded” which will support our 70.09(2)(a)(2) language that requires the real property lister to maintain the owner’s name and an accurate description as shown in the latest records of the office of register of deeds. District 3 supports this resolution along with requesting action to support by the Board of Directors.

Dates in early June of 2009 were for distributed for the Real Estate Transfer Return “eRETR” Filers Workshops. Recent legislation mandates electronic filings by July 1, 2009. No pre-registration was required. You can contact your own Register of Deeds for a meeting date and place close to you.

The Education Committee has requested each county turn in their respective job descriptions for placement on our associations website.

A majority of the meeting was used to discuss the proposed reengineering of Wisconsin’s Property Tax system. Representatives from LaCrosse County had recently attended a daylong meeting in Madison to hear about IPAS (Integrated Property Assessment System) and the Department of Revenues goals to go from a state with 1850 plus assessment districts to less than 100 districts. The new Districts would be called regional or unified districts. The DOR wants to see a single annual full value assessment with full time professional assessors. Along with an integrated system using IPAS as the core valuing system, the state is looking to enhance citizen confidence in the assessment and taxation processes, enhance their ability to audit data, produce uniform and consistent data and assessments across the state, and to adopt a more service oriented organization that adheres to IAAO standards to bring professionalism back to assessing. The DOR also wants to get involved with GIS and determine how other state agencies can use parcel related data.

The district recommended Lauree Kratcha from Jackson County be placed on the list of nominees for President, along with Sherry Bierman to replace herself as Treasurer for another two year term.

District 4 report: Matt Dahlen-Vernon County

Donna Lyons retired on May 14, 2009 we wish her all of the luck and hope she has a great retirement. We had our Spring District Meeting on May 15, 2009. Fifteen people attended including Stan Hook from the Department of Revenue. It was a good meeting with a lot of opinions shared. On a personal note, I have 24 of my 33 municipalities in and completed. Otherwise I have been busy dealing with cemeteries, Amish, and attorneys. Enjoy your summer!

COUNTY NEWS

Monroe County Notes

Our rolls went out and came back in quick. We have already run notices for over 60% of our municipalities. We probably haven't reached that point for another two months in the past. There have not been any new crazy situations to deal with here. There still are some from the past that are yet to be resolved though. On a final note, the treasurer's office, which I am part of, could get a lot more work done if we didn't get so many phone calls from "Victor."

Kathy - Green County

Hi to all -

Just 2 reveals left here in Green County. All the rolls came in really great this year and I can't believe I only have 2 left. We do everything digitally and it was the first year that things really seemed to run smoothly.

Our office space will be expanding this fall into an adjoining office, as we have built a new justice center, so all those offices are moving out of the courthouse this fall, (clerk of courts, corp counsel, DA, etc). Zoning, Tourism and Green Co Development offices will be moving into the courthouse from out at our Pleasant View complex building. It will be really quiet around here without the court system - no more orange jumpsuits walking around.

On the personal side - just keeping busy with hubby, children and 9 grandchildren. It's hard to believe - it seems like only yesterday we were watching our own kids ball games, piano recitals, etc. and now we are busy going to Little League games and dance recitals for our grandchild-

dren. Oh, where do those years go!!! Just so thankful for our health and we are able to enjoy life so much! Even getting up and going to work each day is a blessing.

Have a great summer everyone!!

BARBARA STRUZYSKI Waushara. Co

Waushara County cut 8 hours from my part-time person. We were without a part-time person for the first 3.5 months of the year. We have now hired a 12 hour a week person and are busy training her. Tonya Nigh our new person has been a town clerk and has worked in a real estate office so she is picking up the terms used in our office very fast.

Hopefully I will be able to make use of our fifth wheel this summer for some R&R with the hubby (retiring in June) and the grandkids.

LaCrosse County - District 3 - Jeff Bluske

Well, as many of you may not know, one of the hats that I wear has been busy helping local municipalities understand and prepare applications for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (aka the economic stimulus program) and to prepare the required planning documents to support the requests thru our Metropolitan Planning Organization. Back in March we submitted a Transportation Improvement Program with about \$10 million worth of requests for stimulus funding. Bottom line we received \$1.3 million. Better than nothing.

On April 30, four reps from LaCrosse County including Pam and I went to Madison to listen to a presentation put on by the Department of Revenue discussing the Reengineering of Wisconsin's Property Tax and Assessment system. We listened to a power point presentation about how complex, inequitable, inefficient and out of step the current system is. The complexity comes from a dual value system which allows assessed values to be less than 100% from more than 1850 assessment districts. Then the values must be equalized by the state. The state calls the property tax system a "zero-sum" game, which means there is lots of dissatisfaction because there is always a need to pay more taxes because some else is paying less. The timing of the appeals during the Board of Review is inconsistent from year to year. We have found in our county as has the state that the high valued properties are all under assessed (regressive assessments) and the low value property are assessed to much creating a tax burden on the low income residential parcels.

So the DOR is proposing a solution that lays out a single full value assessment every year, thus eliminating the Equalization process. Their goal is to reduce the number of assessment districts to 100 or less and to create unified assessment districts that require full time professional assessment staff that use the states new IPAS (Integrated Property Assessment System) for assessing uniformly across the state.

Naturally this will involve legislative changes to the statutes along with developing a funding source. We discussed averaging costs over a 5-6 period for each municipality including the year of the revalue, which would show the local units of government are paying actually paying more like \$15-16,000 per year when including a revalue for around \$50,000. We had questions where the full time staff would be housed, who's hardware system would they be on, what payroll/benefit is used and more. It is very evident the state needs our help and that of local government for this to work. Wisconsin has tried to make county-wide, regional, or unified assessing work in the past but have never had computer software to make it work. I believe the time has come that we make this change statewide. I also believe that with the help of WAAO and their professional platform that we can make this happen to finally uniformly benefit the taxpayers of this great state.

Sauk County- Ann Burton

Assessment rolls are coming in at a good pace and we are almost 2/3 the way through the municipalities. Our assessors are having to deal with determining the values on flood damaged properties, of which there are many throughout the county. We have asked our assessors to provide us with information on those parcels with decreased value because of flooding so we can track them over time for issues such as tax delinquency, etc. The good news is that Lake Delton is now a lake again, so waterfront properties can be assessed as such for 2009.

Retired County Treasurer, Pat Carignan, is thoroughly enjoying

her retirement. Our new County Treasurer, Elizabeth 'Liz' Geoghegan, is doing a great job and things are going well in our office. We have concerns about pending legislation that may again require reprogramming for the tax bill & settlement programs as budgets and staff time are constrained. Hopefully common sense will reign (the eternal optimistfool that I am!).

Betty Blumenstein- Taylor Co

Real Property Lister

Most of our books are in. The ones left are the ones where the assessor's are doing revals and they will be later. Things have been quiet but busy this spring. Our deed volume is down slightly but still lots of changes in Taylor County. Like all over I am sure, we have lots more foreclosures coming through. Our website with ADC is working out very well. We have had lots of positive feedback from the public and our office uses it daily. Hope everyone is having a good spring!

Lynn Freimuth- Onieda Co.

Oneida County has been working hard all winter to finish our parcel mapping project. We are very near completion with just a few survey towns left to go. We will then begin the process of identifying ownership on all of the gap parcels and finish all of the clean up work.

To date I have five of our twenty-one towns assessment data in and their assessment rolls out. Last year was a record year for us with eight revaluations. Thankfully this year there are only four scheduled.

Our recorded documents are markedly down this year and yes, our foreclosures have been on the increase as many of you reported already last year. Ours on the other hand have just begun, although I have to say not yet in the second home class of properties as we are quite top heavy on. That being the case I am hopeful that our valuations will hold somewhat.

Sherry from Vilas county and I have been having fun planning this years ASM and are hoping to see you all there. The location is quite beautiful so keep your fingers crossed for exceptional weather.

Burnett Co. Roxanne Moore

I have downloaded and printed 18 out of 24 municipalities as of June 6. For a first year endeavor—that's pretty good! I have also retrieved Board of Review info and balanced 10 of those 18 and sent the SOA in to the State. Seems like the assessment process went really fast this year. I've had some lapalooza deed problems lately. Doesn't it seem like the weirdness gets worse as time goes on? This July is my 35th anniversary with Burnett County.

We are tearing into the old house again. This time it's the kitchen! I confess that I am particularly excited about this coming renovation. I will finally have a real kitchen and not something out of 1920. I'll be able to cook and not trip over shoes. I'll be able to take the turkey out of the oven and actually put it somewhere other than the floor! Whoopee! I hope all have a good summer!

Membership Committee Spring Report

In March we sent out a questionnaire that consisted of ten questions to all the listers that had missed at least one of the last two ASM's in 2007 and 2008. We sent the survey to 25 counties and we received 12 replies and had 13 no responses. Unfortunately the no responses were from the counties that had not attended either one of the ASM's. Our main goal is to see if there is actually something that we as a group can work on to get a better attendance at the ASM. So please if you have a survey, take a minute to fill it out and return to me. We are interested in knowing if there is something that can be changed to better our attendance.

At the Spring Board Meeting we discussed the options of trying to sell advertising on our new web site. It was decided the start up costs were just too much at this time.

We are also looking for all the cities in the State that do their own listing. The Vice Presidents were asked at the Board meeting to ask this question at their Spring District Meetings. So, if anyone is aware of any cities in their counties that do their own listing, if you could please forward that information either to myself or Janet Krucky or to Laura Jean Blotz.

Thank You,

Pam Hollnagel, Chair Membership Committee

ON JULY 20, 1969, NEIL ARMSTRONG, COMMANDER OF THE APOLLO 11 LUNAR MODULE, WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO SET FOOT ON THE MOON.

HIS FIRST WORDS AFTER STEPPING ON THE MOON, 'THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND,' WERE TELEVISED TO EARTH AND HEARD BY MILLIONS. BUT JUST BEFORE HE REENTERED THE LANDER, HE MADE THE ENIGMATIC REMARK 'GOOD LUCK, MR. GORSKY.'

MANY PEOPLE AT NASA THOUGH IT WAS A CASUAL REMARK CONCERNING SOME RIVAL SOVIET COSMONAUT. HOWEVER, UPON CHECKING, THERE WAS NO GORSKY IN EITHER THE RUSSIAN OR AMERICAN SPACE PROGRAMS. MANY PEOPLE QUESTIONED ARMSTRONG AS TO WHAT THE 'GOOD LUCK, MR. GORSKY... STATEMENT MEANT, BUT ARMSTRONG ALWAYS JUST SMILED.

ON JULY 5, 1995, IN TAMPA BAY, FLORIDA WHILE ANSWERING QUESTIONS FOLLOWING A SPEECH, A REPORTER BROUGHT UP THE 26-YEAR-OLD QUESTION TO ARMSTRONG. THIS TIME HE FINALLY RESPONDED. MR. GORSKY HAD DIED, SO NEIL ARMSTRONG FELT HE COULD NOW ANSWER THE QUESTION.

IN 1938, WHEN HE WAS A KID IN A SMALL MID-WEST TOWN, HE WAS PLAYING BASEBALL WITH A FRIEND IN THE BACKYARD. HIS FRIEND HIT THE BALL, WHICH LANDED IN HIS NEIGHBOR'S YARD BY THEIR BEDROOM WINDOW. HIS NEIGHBORS WERE MR. AND MRS. GORSKY.

AS HE LEANED DOWN TO PICK UP THE BALL, YOUNG ARMSTRONG HEARD MRS. GORSKY SHOUTING AT MR. GORSKY. 'SEX! YOU WANT SEX?! YOU'LL GET SEX WHEN THE KID NEXT DOOR WALKS ON THE MOON!'

TRUE STORY!

ASM COMMITTEE REPORT by: Sherry Bierman & Lynn Freimuth

ASM UPDATE

AHOY Mates!! (Can you guess our theme?)

Oneida and Vilas County are looking forward to having the WRPLA 2009 ASM coming north this year! If you have not made your reservations, remember you need to “share” a condo with a friend, or anyone will do. Wild Eagle Lodge 715-479-3151, Toll Free 1-877-945-3965, www.wildeaglelodge.com . There are one, two, three bedroom condos available. Each unit has a view of the water and is right out the front doors. Otherwise there is a Settle Inn within a mile of Wild Eagle Lodge that would honor the state rate-715-479-4900. We did not reserve any rooms there, but the hotel felt comfortable that they would be able to accommodate anyone that would like to go there.

There will be an Education –Training session 1:00 to 4:00 on Tuesday, September 15, 2009. The topic has not been decided on, but we will keep you posted on that. The Golf outing will follow; all are invited in this outing, regardless of your talent, or lack of. We will try to meet up at a restaurant close to the golf course for dinner or you can find a wonderful place on your own.

The agenda is coming along very well; a variety of topics and speakers have been chosen for you that should be enriching and interesting. We are very excited about this years ASM-Oneida and Vilas counties offer a wonderful variety of lakes, wildlife and an abundance of recreational activities. Year round you can always find something to do in these two beautiful counties!

Wednesday evening we would like to have a cookout; with every district bringing a dish to pass, since we all have our own kitchen facilities we felt that would be workable.

For our banquet this year we will board the “Pirate Ship” and be sailed to our restaurant. The voyage will have to be made in two trips so while the first group is on the high seas, we can begin our social hour back at the condos.

If you are a “phenomenon” seeker there is a “local” one just forty five minutes north of Eagle River, in Paulding MI(you have to remember up North our neighbors may live five miles away, but are still our neighbors-so to us that is “local”). This is the Paulding Light. Legend has it that a railroad brakeman’s ghost, destined to remain forever at the sight of his untimely death. He continually waves his signal lantern as a warning to all who come to visit It is really different.

Otherwise the date is set and Lynn and I are eager to see all of you up North!

DOR – RPL Liaison Committee Meeting.

WDOR Liaison Committee/SLF/Assessment Related Work Group.

We have not met with the DOR as a committee since our initial meeting on November 18th. However, some of us have been working with them on data transfers of the assessment roll. I have been working with them since November on transferring the Dodge County data. As of April 29th, they extended the “pilot” to other committee members.

The actual process to transfer the data file will be similar to the Statement of Assessment. They are still trying to identify available fields so I don’t know if they have successfully loaded the data. The biggest obstacle to overcome is a lack of standardized data files from county to county.

In addition, Jeremy appointed Al Brokmeier and I to the SLF/Assessment Related Work Group. We met on April 16th. The work group is represented by several organizations involved in the assessment process as well as DOR representatives. As you are likely aware, the DOR has two goals: 1) A single-value property tax system; and 2) Unified Assessment Districts.

I have filled you in with a lot of the details already, so I won’t repeat everything. The single-value system is easy to understand (though maybe not so easy to implement) – no more equalized value. The Unified Assessment Districts could mean a variety of things. I would just like to emphasize that at this point, it is all discussion.

If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. We will certainly be discussing this issue in more detail.

David Addison

THINKING OUT LOUD

I’ve been thinking about how this is my favorite time of year as far as my work is concerned...the **Assessment Season** when there is actually a “*black and white*” world that I can live in for a period of time. I either balance with the assessors and the municipalities, or I don’t. When we don’t balance I enjoy the challenge of discovering why. I think that means that I function with my left brain. Then again, my right brain must be alive and well as I tend to do a lot of dreaming. Dreaming of a property listing world where all property owners had their property surveyed, where title companies and lawyers had the same objectives as we do, a world where one would not have to interpret statute but be able to go to a handbook for ALL the answers, etc. Maybe that sounds boring to some but I rather like it. In conclusion, I’ll just have to find peace in knowing that both sides of my entire brain are functioning!

I’m off to Seattle in search of the perfect cup of coffee!

Pat Haas

Barron County

The DOR invited the WRPLA to join what they call the "SLF/Assessment Related Work Group". Jeremy asked Al & I to be a part of that group. We had our first meeting on April 16th. The plan is for quarterly meetings over the next 2 or 3 years.

What you are seeing is their Strategic Plan. They emphasized that this is their concept of what they would like to see happen. My understanding is this is not current policy or part of the budget. What is outlined may never see the light of day. If you examine the document, the same concept has been brought up several times since 1973. The difference I see this time around is that technology makes this much more feasible today.

The big goal is to have a single-value property tax system, meaning no more equalized value. Values would be kept at full value each year. They also want to reduce the number of "assessment jurisdictions" from the roughly 1800 municipalities in the state to under 100. My interpretation is they would like to see those services combined so they are only dealing with the 100 versus the 1800. One concept would be by county or possibly county consortiums.

We did not really discuss the concepts for accomplishing all of this. This first meeting was more introductory. What are the options? Off the top of my head(not to be interpreted as endorsements):

- 1) Full county assessing - county staff hired
Pros - more standard assessing.
Cons - cost, cost, cost
- 2) County contracts out the service
Pros - could use current assessors
Cons - cost of administering. I don't see how it could be done without adding at least one position.
- 3) Leave as is
Pros - status quo
Cons - does not meet DOR objectives

How would it be paid for? That's the big question (issue) for the counties. We have not discussed in any detail, but could include:

- 1) Tax levy increase
- 2) Services billed to the local municipalities
- 3) State aid

The driving force behind the whole thing has been data-processing and a significant reduction in staff at DOR. They need to automate the process as much as possible. The RETR will be in full use this July. That data should feed the IPAS system. I believe IPAS is functional, but not complete. They are now working on loading assessment and tax data from counties to feed into IPAS. Eventually, they plan to have what amounts to a state-wide database (and eventually GIS) of assessment information. They plan to make information available to other government agencies and the public.

So, long story short, the workgroup was formed to get the input of the various stakeholders. The obvious omission I noticed was there were no representatives from the County Association (and I did not want us to be viewed as representing the counties). They said at the meeting they would be inviting someone to represent the County Association.

I also was at the Board of Director's Meeting on April 17th and we discussed this issue. I would expect your VP's will have it on the agenda at your district meetings. I had planned to write something up for

the next newsletter. It will obviously be a topic for discussion at the ASM in September as this is going to be a "hot topic" for a while.

I guess the best thing I can say at this point is don't panic, it may amount to nothing. On the flip-side, if it does happen, it would have a significant affect on how we do our jobs and the tools we use to do them.

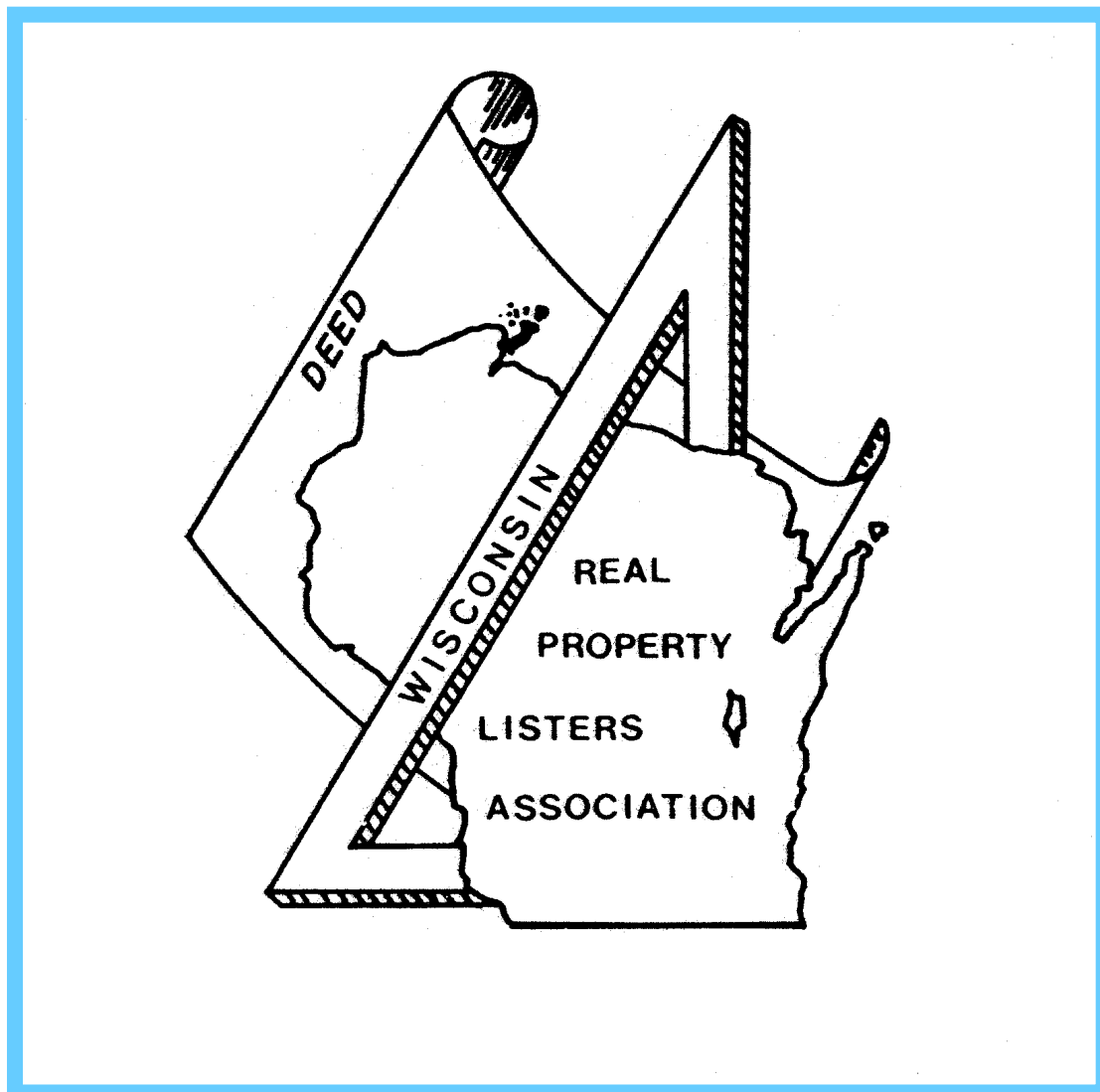
Any questions or other input, feel free to contact me. I will do my best to answer any questions.

David A. Addison, Senior Land Information Specialist

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WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS:

Contact the Editor at:

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