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October 10, 2012

Vicki Hyatt
The Mountaineer
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Subject: The Water Girl.

Vicki,

Are you attempting to take over Caroline Klapper's coveted title of "The Water Girl" just because you are the boss? It certainly appears so, with your timely front page article on "The tax that won't go away" in the Mountaineer's October 8th issue carrying the water for David Francis, Haywood County Tax Collector.

Can you see how uncanny and coincidental the timeliness of your article is, only one day before a highly publicized meeting **I was supposed to have** with Judy Ballard on the very same topic [re: www.haywoodtp.net/pubTP/T121003SE.pdf] of Private Property Listings?

The meeting never happened, by the way, because David Francis sandbagged it [re: recording]. I never received an indication by phone, e-mail, or any other means, that Judy Ballard was not going to be there at 10:00am, but instead out doing some audit, and then immediately going on vacation until November 5th.

You should have seen all those boxes of letters someone had pulled out of files! There were three (3) gigantic trays of them, could have been 2,000 or so.

Do you know what I was going to cover in that meeting?

Twenty seven (27) questions relating to two letters sent out by David Francis' Tax Collection department, over three (3) pages that had been accumulating over the last four (4) months. Francis is diligently looking now to schedule another meeting with someone else in his department that he can throw under the bus.

By the way, not to let Caroline Klapper's title slip away, there should be much more to write about Jason Rogers (he is the building inspector for the town of Waynesville) very shortly. It should be interesting to measure who can carry the water better: you for Francis, or Caroline Klapper for Rogers.

By the way, there is now open discussion of bringing the FBI into town [re: recording] to take a look at going's on in the Tax Collection Department.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Monroe A. Miller Jr.

enc: scanned copy of "The tax that won't go away"



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The tax that won't go away

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It happens every year at the Haywood County tax office.

When letters go out, they are often ignored. Bills, however, get a reaction.

In an effort to clean up the records on personal property listings — items such as campers, boats, mobile homes, unregistered cars, machinery or equipment — personnel reviewed information self-reported in January. The listing requirement doesn't apply to vehicles that are licensed and tagged, however.

"If roll, floats or flies, it will probably be taxable," said Haywood County Tax Collector David Francis in relating a rule of thumb on what needs to be listed on a personal property tax form.

If a personal property listing had discrepancies from what an individual previously claimed, a letter was sent out.

For an item to be removed from the tax rolls, it is necessary to provide bills or sale or proof a piece of personal property has been junked for it to be removed from the tax rolls, Francis said.

Many who are unfamiliar with the requirement simply omit an item from the self-reported listing in January. Many didn't receive letters until the past month or so because it takes a while for tax personnel to go through the records and find where items don't match up.

"If somebody sells a piece of property and doesn't let us know, it is still on their taxes," Francis said.

The instruction sheet that accompanies the listing form asks taxpayers to put the name of the individual who bought the piece of personal property so it will be taxable under the buyer's

Taxes continues on 7A

Tax

continued from 1A

listing, said Judy Ballard, tax assessor.

"We must have proof of what happened to it," she stressed.

If the piece of property such as a mobile home is junked, there is a junk value assigned to the property which still must be paid. If an item is hauled to the junk yard or even the landfill, taxpayers can request documentation which can then be provided to the tax office.

"We send out personal property tax letters every year to people who do not return forms," she said. "It is a second chance for them to let us know if still own items."

Once proof is provided that an item has been sold or disposed of, it can come off the tax rolls in subsequent years. If a person has no proof, there is a one-

month time frame to visit the tax office to sign a sworn, notarized statement saying the property is no longer owned. That short window of time is between Jan. 1 and 31 of each year, the time frame in which personal property must be listed with the tax office.

Instructions accompanying the form state that "taxpayers who list property at a value less than its true value, file a false listing or affirmation, remove or conceal property for the purpose of evading taxes or fail to file a proper listing may be subject to a fine of up to \$500 or six months imprisonment."

The records review is just one of the ways the county tax personnel

On boats, for instance, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission shares information, and airplane hangar owners have rental in-

formation that can lead to the discovery of aircraft for taxation purposes.

Personal property taxes aren't the only types of taxes that require check-up work.

Much of the undeveloped land in the county is taxed at its "use value," which includes uses such as forestry, horticulture or agriculture. The use value is much lower than the market value and provides a substantial tax savings to property owners.

On a rotating basis, Francis said county personnel visit the areas to ensure the property is being used for in accordance to the claimed value.

"If a piece of property is listed as farmland and it's all grown up with no obvious farming going on, we'll look at that," Francis said.