CAAO RESEARCH/HISTORIAN COMMITTEE

History of Connecticut Assessors

Volume #6

Women In The Assessing Field

Assessors School At UConn

COVID-19

Technology Brought Assessors Together

Historical Facts About Assessors

Retention of current events will prevent the loss of history for future generations

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CAAO RESEARCH / HISTORIAN COMMITTEE

HISTORY OF CONNECTICUT ASSESSORS

VOLUME #6

Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers

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DEDICATION

Charles G. Agli, Jr.

This *History of Connecticut Assessors*, Volume #6, is dedicated to Charles G. Agli, Jr. for his contribution to the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers and the CAAO Research and Historian Committee. Charlie's assessing career began in 1977 with the City of New Britain Assessors Office where he was employed for 27 years, seventeen as the City Assessor. He was a long tenured member of the CAAO Motor Vehicle, Education and Legislative Committees. He was president of CAAO in 1990. His involvement in the CAAO Research / Historian Committee has been invaluable, as a member for the past 20 years and as the Chairman, Co-Chairman and Acting Chairman for the past 14 years. A summary of Charles G. Agli, Jr. career can be found in Volume #2 on page 127 of the *History of Connecticut Assessors.*

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FOREWORD

The Research/Historian Committee is pleased and relieved to present Volume #6 of the *History of Connecticut Assessors* to you just three years after the publication of Volume #5. The Committee has been in a period of transition since January 2020. We have had difficulty maintaining a Chairperson for a few years. Those who have served as Chairperson during that time have served well. However, their tenures were short. Now, members of the Committee who have been instrumental in producing the *History of Connecticut Assessors*, Volumes #1 through #6, will not be working on future volumes as they have in the past. It is time for other individuals who are interested in documenting the history of assessors in Connecticut to get involved and to continue this very worthwhile endeavor.

Volume #6 presents an impressive collection of assessor interview write-ups. These interview write-ups have been the central content of all volumes of the *History of Connecticut Assessors*. You will also find updates on assessors whose interview writeups appeared in earlier volumes.

There are many interesting and informative articles and reprints that capture various events, assessment facts and personal stories that contribute to the documentation of our rich history. Of particular note are several articles concerning the journey of women in the assessment profession. Also, the feature of Assessment History Briefs has continued with content dating from May 1992 through February 1995.

The Research/Historian Committee finds the pursuit of the history of assessors in Connecticut to be enlightening and rewarding. Our goal is to uncover and document that history for the benefit of the members of the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers and anyone else who might be interested in the history of assessment administration in the State of Connecticut.

Assessoreporter History Briefs May-June 1992 to January-February 1995

The following information was abstracted from various issues of the *Assessoreporter*. It reflects a brief history of CAAO and its assessors from May 1992 to February 1995.

(AR) May-June 1992: Unique sales file: Editors Corner of the *Assessoreporter* discussed plans being made by CAAO to maintain a central file for all unique sales within the state**.**

(AR) **July–August 1992: Sales data form:** The *Assessoreporter* had a data form requesting sales information on unique properties.

(AR) **September-October 1992: *CAAO Data Line* begins:** *Assessoreporter* started the first *CAAO Data Line* with 5 unique sales. Four sales came from Newington and one from Tolland.

(AR) May-June 1992: Computer access to town assessment records: The Town of Windsor announced the introduction of INQUIRE, a program that provides computer access to the town assessment records for use by the public.

(AR) May-June 1992: **Licensing and Certification of assessors:** There were discussions, both on a CAAO Executive Board level and county level about assessors being exempt from the state licensing of appraisers. The exemption was taken out of the licensing statute in 1991 and the CAAO Executive Board wants it back in. The exemption would apply to those assessors who have their CCMA designation.

(AR) July-August 1992: Licensing: CAAO Executive Board continues the discussion and concern about the assessors' certification and appraiser licensing issue.

(AR) July-August: 1992: Best Article Award: The Professional Designation Committee voted to establish an award for the best article in the *Assessoreporter*. The first award will be chosen from articles written between January 1 and December 31,1992. The award will be presented at the annual spring meeting. (Note: The first Best Article Award was not awarded until the May 12, 1994 at the CAAO Spring Meeting. There were two winners. Robert Dudek of New Britain and Gordon Donley of New Canaan were the winners of the first Best Article Award.)

(AR) September-October 1992: Computer records: Hartford Assessor, Bob Hartzell, announced that Hartford was starting a subscription service to their computer records. The initial fee would be $200 and a charge of $.50 per lookup would apply. They are hoping for between 50 and 75 subscriptions.

(AR) November-December 1992 & January-February 1993: Old Saybrook Revaluation: The Old Saybrook's 1989 revaluation was a topic in both issues. The background of the court case involves the assessor's reliance on the revaluation company to view each parcel of real estate. The State Supreme Court justices reversed a lower court's decision that nullified the town's 1989 revaluation. The Supreme Court's ruling was based on a technicality that the challenge to the revaluation was not brought in a timely manner. Public Act 92-221 now allows the assessor to designate agents (the revaluation company) to view properties.

(AR) March-April 1993: New editors. For Bob Dudek and Kathie Rubenbauer, this is their first issue as co-editors of the *Assessoreporter*.

(AR) March-April 1993: Active legislative session: Over fifty bills with the potential of impacting assessment and taxation were introduced during the 1993 session of the General Assembly. One of the bills, SSB 848 will defer appointments to the Connecticut Appeals Board for Property Valuation until March 1, 1996.

(AR) March-April 1993: Revaluation delay: The town of Greenwich has received permission to delay implementing a revaluation that has already cost over $1 million. Citing nearly 3,000 pending appeals and the resignation of the board of tax review chairman, the request was granted per CGS 12-117. The decision to delay the revaluation was, in part, on the intent of the General Assembly in enacting PA 92-193, which extended until October 1, 1993, the date by which a required decennial revaluation has to be implemented.

(AR) May-June 1993: Assessors band: Manifestly Excessive, a band made up of seven CAAO members (six whom are assessors), made its debut June 9th at the 49th annual Assessors School banquet held at Zenny's Restaurant in Mansfield.

(AR) July-August 1993: Motor vehicle contract: At its August 11th meeting the CAAO Executive Board voted to accept the Motor Vehicle Committee's recommendation to award the motor vehicle pricing contract to the National Automobile Dealers' Association, Inc. (NADA). The one-year contract was for $38,940. The only other bidder was Maclean Hunter (Red Book).

(AR) July-August 1993: Assessments do not match sagging real estate market: There was a well-written article in this issue of the *Assessoreporter* where taxpayers were complaining that their current home values were not worth what the assessor has on them. What the assessors are explaining to the taxpayers is the values are fixed as of a certain date (In this case it was a down market and a 10 year revaluation cycle). Values are set as of the date of the revaluation and are not increased or decreased until the next revaluation (unless there is an error). Note: We wonder if the taxpayers were coming into the assessors' office during 2021 when values went through the roof?

(AR) July-August 1993: With the assistance of the Groton Public Library Information Center, Groton Assessor Anne Dougherty produced an information video as part of her public relations campaign for the town's 1992 revaluation.

(AR) September-October 1993: Groton Assessor Criticizes Antique Home Reduction: Assessor Anne Dougherty said that during the appeals process, the board of tax review decided that multifamily homes should not be included in the antique homes designation. "It was a manufactured reason made by the board of tax review and has no basis in the market." She said placing a house in the antique category has nothing to do with how many apartments are in the building, but everything to do with the design and appeal of historic houses and the price people are willing to pay for them.

(AR) November-December 1993: At a recent North Canaan town meeting, taxpayers came out overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining the status quo in the town assessor's office. Selectmen called the meeting after being presented with a 23-signature petition calling for the appointed assessor's position to be replaced with a three member elected board. The town was previously served by a board of assessors, which was abolished in 1986.

(AR) November-December 1993: Seven Candidates Club members recently passed the IAAO Case Study Examination On The Mass Appraisal Of Income Producing Properties. New Canaan Assessor Gordon Donley monitored the comprehensive, eight-hour exam, which tests knowledge of the methods of valuing income-producing property. The following CAAO members received passing grades; Melissa Bonin, Mark DeVestern, Gary Fields, Pat Hedwall, Lawrence LaBarbera, Angelo Marino and Joan Robinson.

(AR) January-February 1994: The 1994 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly convened on Wednesday February 9th, amid calls for property tax reform and regionalization. Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. surprised legislators during his State of the State Address, saying the state's finances were sound enough to phase out personal property tax on motor vehicles by 1998 and to eliminate all personal property taxes within ten years. Weicker also called for the end of local revaluations as of 1996, when the state would take them over and do them every three years. *(Sidebar: In 1991 Governor Weicker signed into law a flat 4.5 percent income tax)*

(AR) January-February 1994: Motor vehicle pricing change gets lots of press. Called into question is the change from past practices. In previous years two national guides were used for the pricing of automobiles. The July issue of these guides were used and the values reduced by 10% to account for the difference from July to October. The values are now based on the NADA October issue. The change in pricing schedules has brought about disagreements between assessors.

(AR) January-February 1994: Meriden Council, Approves $20,000 to Review BTR Changes. An independent real estate appraiser will survey 250 properties chosen at random to determine whether the values assigned to them by Meriden's board of tax review in the recent citywide revaluation were accurate. The appraiser would review about 10 percent of the properties that were granted assessment reductions by the BTR in 1992 and 1993. The review board heard more than 3,000 appeals and granted reductions in about 90 percent of the cases.

(AR) March-April 1994: 50 Years of Learning, Assessors School 1944-1994. This 60 page *Assessoreporter* was a special edition dedicated to the golden anniversary of the Assessors School. The newsletter presents s a brief history of the Assessors School, letter of congratulation from Senator Dodd and Senator Lieberman together with photos of assessors, classes and congratulation letters from county assessors associations.

(AR) May-June 1994: More reviews of the fiftieth anniversary of the Annual School for Connecticut Assessors held the week of June 5, 1994, at the University of Connecticut. The week opened up on Monday with a history of the CAAO as related by Ed Dowling and a personal recollection of the invasion of Normandy presented by former Rocky Hill Assessor Bill

Coughlin (who received a standing ovation in gratitude to him and all the others responsible for the success of the endeavor). Included in this addition of the newsletter, were letters of congratulation from Connecticut Governor Lowell P. Weicker, University of Connecticut President Harry J. Hartley, Dean of the Extended and Continuing Education Division Doe Hentschel. Ph. D. and IAAO President David A. Wheelock.

(AR) May-June 1994: New statute on the motor vehicle schedule was reviewed. Public Act 94-4 Section 3 states that on or before the first of October each year, the secretary of the office of policy and management shall recommend a schedule of motor vehicle values which shall be used. Also, problems associated with motor vehicle schedules were covered.

(AR) July-August 1994: This is the first issue of the *Assessoreporter* that has an index, on the front cover for the articles that appear in the current issue. There was a suggestion by a Litchfield County Assessor to index all back issues. CAMA funding restored: The legislation enacted at the eleventh hour of the May Special Session, restored funding for Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system. (See Public Act 94-2.) The Property Tax Reform Commission created by Public Act 94-4 had its' initial meeting on July 21, 1994.

(AR) September-October 1994: Subdivision assessment upheld by Supreme Court. The Killingworth assessor assessed a property into individual building lots as of October 1, 1989, even though the subdivision map was not recorded until November 13, 1989. The subdivision and the subdivision map were approved prior to October 1, 1989. The Superior Court ruled against the property owner, stating that the town assessor has legally and properly assessed the plaintiff's land. New motor vehicle pricing: The town of Somers formed a committee to look into the reason why motor vehicle assessments increased so much. A review of the new state guidelines for assessing automobiles will be reviewed. Tolland assessor also commented on the new procedure for assessing motor vehicles.

(AR) November-December 1994: The Property Tax Reform Commission makes recommendations. Some of the recommendations deal with CAMA and Administration Standards, State Grant in Aid for CAMA systems, Performance Base Revaluations and Frequency of Revaluations. New committee's formed: At the December 21, 1994 CAAO Executive Board, CAAO President Joan Paskewich announced the formation of two new committees. They include the Research/Historian Committee and the Curriculum Development Committee.

(AR) January-February 1995: There were comments in the President Corner column and Readers Corner about non-CAAO members being appointed to CAAO Committees. The Property Tax Reform Commission makes final conclusions. Peter Marsele marks fifty years in the assessing field. Mr. Marsele began his career-assessing career 50 years ago in the Waterbury assessor's office. *Sidebar update: Peter served as the assessor of Bloomfield from 1952 to 2005 marking 60 years in the assessing field.*

Kinsella Helps To Lay Plans For Assessing Association

Local Board Member Heads Advisory Committee to Hackett

Reprint from the January 4, 1935 issue of The Hartford Courant

George F. Kinsella, member of the Board of Assessors of Hartford, is chairman of an advisory committee to State Tax Commissioner William H. Hackett, in reference to the proposed establishment of a State Assessing Officials' Association, a program which will be considered at a general meeting of assessors and Board of Relief members in Connecticut, to be held in the hall of the House of Representatives, at 1 p. m. Monday, January 14. A general invitation has been extended to assessing officials to take part in this session, at which a plan for adoption of a constitution and by-laws, with the possible election of officers, will be discussed.

The advisory committee recommends an organization of this nature, with membership to consist of all assessors, members of Boards of Relief, and chief clerks in Connecticut, through a plan for regular meetings for action on matters of interest to assessing officials of Connecticut.

Commissioner Hackett has expressed approval of the committee recommendations, asserting his belief that "if such a state association is formed, it will be of great influence and benefit to improve assessing methods in the state."

With Assessor Kinsella as chairman, the others members of the advisory committee are: Ralph Bishop, president, Board of Assessors, New Haven; Assessor Justin McCarty, Stamford: Assessor J. Hull Manwaring, New London; William P. Hull, chairman, Board of Assessors, Clinton; John R. Pickett, chairman Board of Assessors, Windham; John D. McGowan, chairman, Board of Assessors, Watertown; Andrew M. Grant, member, Board of Relief, Mansfield.

******

Assessing Officials' Association Of Connecticut Officers 1935

Officers:

President - George F. Kinsella, Hartford
Vice-President – Justin McCarthy, Stamford
Secretary-Treasure – Ralph L. Bishop, New Haven

Executive Board:

John H. Crary, Waterbury
Andrew M. Grant***, Mansfield
William P. Hull, Clinton
James W. Kelleher, East Hartford
J. Hull Manwaring, New London
John D. McGowan, Watertown
Charles H. Palmer***, Windham
Frank I. Palmer, Greenwich

Legislative Committee:

George F. Kinsella, Hartford
Justin McCarthy, Stamford
Ralph L. Bishop, New Haven
William P. Hull, Clinton
J. Hull Manwaring, New London

*Note: This is a listing of the first Connecticut assessors' association officers, executive board and legislative committee. *** Represents members of the board of relief.*

Research / Historian Committee Formation

Copy of original letter

Town of Berlin

Office of the Assessor
Berlin Town Hall
240 Kensington Road - Berlin Connecticut06037
(203) 828-7067

January 17, 1995

At the Executive Board meeting on December 21, 1994 a new committee was formed. This committee was named Research / Historian Committee.

President Joan Paskewich asked me to chair this new committee. Along with that request she gave me a list of possible committee members. This list wasn't meant to be all-inclusive but rather a starting point.

I am sending this letter to all listed below in hopes that all could (if interested) attend an organization meeting. I feel that it will not take more than one or two meetings a year to keep this committee rolling along.

Meeting to be held at Berlin Town Hall Tuesday January 24, 1995 at 2:00 PM.[1]

Paul Slattery
Edward Clifford
Bill Coughlin
Frank Callahan
Walter Kent
Al Standish
Gordon Donley
Ed Dowling
Ed Sembor
Dick Prendergast
Bob Kemp

Richard Feegel

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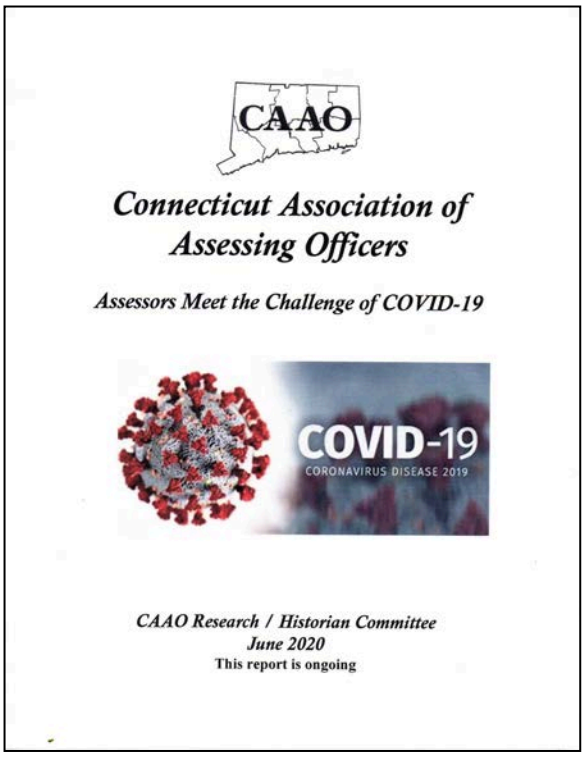
[1] The location of the meeting was changed to June 15, 1995 at 9:30 AM at the Old Lyme Town Hall. (This letter is a retype of the original letter that Richard Feegel sent to the above listed assessors)

Connecticut Assessors meet the challenge of COVID-19



Since mid March 2020, Connecticut has closed local town halls to the general public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the local government functions that were readily available to the general public have taken on a different menu.

The assessor's office in each municipality is one of the more active offices in any municipal government. The taxation of real estate, motor vehicles, and personal property brings about a lot of activity under normal circumstances. Filing for a variety of exemptions, that have time line deadlines, brings on a totally different set of problems. Title searches, appraisers, and attorneys are all in search of information to run their businesses.

In an effort to find out how the assessors are going about their daily business, the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers Research Historian Committee asked Connecticut assessors how they were doing. A questionnaire, with 14 questions, was sent out over the assessor's computer Hot Line. Although the number of returns was not huge, the information supplied by those that returned the questionnaire was very informative.

Assessors in the normal course of their duties deal with the public on a face-to-face basis. Now as a result of the pandemic, they had to adjust to a whole new set of rules by bringing in modern technology in order to fulfill their duties. Some of the findings were as follows.

Coming to work: Depending upon the size of the office staff, most work schedules have been modified. In the smaller offices of one to two people, including the assessor, going to the office one at time is the norm. In larger offices, they work in a team setup, staggering office coverage where one team would go in on certain days and the other team on other days. The clerical staff is doing a great deal of work remotely on days that they are not in the office. They are using laptops supplied by the municipality. There are some offices where the entire clerical staff is working from home and going into the office just once a week to pick up work. The communication between the home bound staff and the office is done via telephone, email, and fax. The theory behind all of this is social distancing of the employees. In two reported municipalities the entire staff is required to report to the office.

Layoffs: Of the towns that have reported, there have been no layoffs of full time employees. Part time employees are not reporting at this time.

Contact with the public: With town halls closed, assessors have adopted to modern technology in dealing with the public. Top of the line communications have the public filing documents with online Internet applications. Other forms of communication include emails, fax, phones and regular mail. Then there is the old fashion drop box outside the town hall where taxpayers can drop off documentation directed to the assessor.

Protective equipment: In most town halls**,** mask and gloves are required of people circulating within the building or within six feet of fellow employees. With fewer employees in the office and sitting at your desk, a mask is not required. Some towns are supplying a strong cleaner and disinfectant wipes to clean counters and other surfaces. Plexiglass is being installed in some offices in preparation for public use. In two reporting towns employees have their temperature taken at the town hall entrance by the health department.

Dealing with fieldwork: In some towns, fieldwork has been put on hold for the time being. Other municipalities are doing fieldwork that requires exterior inspection only. Only those properties that require no contact with the property owners are being done. If there is an occasion that the assessor is asked to do an inspection because of a closing or the bank wants to know of the final assessment, the assessor is following the guidelines that some independent appraisers and realtors follow. Everyone stays outside the property and the assessor, with gloves and mask, enters the property for an interior inspection. One community has asked the property owner that has an iPad or cell phone with a camera to scan the improvement so the assessor can view them remotely. Revaluation companies are not attempting interior inspections at this time. Exterior measurements are being done and data mailers are being used in lieu of inspections.

Filing application for the various exemptions: Most exemption forms are online. All the taxpayer has to do is download the form and supply the proper paperwork. Information is returned to the assessor's office via e-mail, fax or regular mail. Per an executive order by Connecticut's Governor Lamont, elderly homeowners do not have to reapply.

Motor vehicle adjustments: Connecticut has a local property tax on motor vehicles. The problems associated with the administration of this program can be enormous. Buying, selling moving, stolen vehicles, over valuation are just a few of the problems. Requiring certain forms of proof does not change under the COVID-19 pandemic. How assessors receive the documentation has changed somewhat. To resolve the problems assessors use emails, fax, letters and the old fashion town hall drop box. Yes, there is the phone available to answer questions.

Viewing or getting copies of property record cards: Most if not all Connecticut towns have a CAMA system with on line capability for obtaining copies of field cards. Many towns also have GIS information on line. If the documentation is not available online the town will try to accommodate the request as best as they can. There was one reported town that had appraisers request to come in to view the records.

What the assessing community has accomplished over a short period is exceptional. Many of the innovations used during this period can be applied during the new normal times.

Assessors School and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The following is a brief summary of the 2020 and 2021 UConn Assessors School and the effects of the COVIC-19 pandemic.

The UConn Assessors School is one of the oldest assessors school in the United States. It was established in 1944 on the University of Connecticut campus at Storrs. The classes were held during the summer months.

The time line leading up to the closing of the 2020 UConn Assessors School includes the following. The first laboratory case of the COVID-19 in the United States was January 21, 2020 in the state of Washington. The first positive case for COVID-19 in Connecticut was announced on March 8, 2020. The first fatality in Connecticut from the corona virus was March 17, 2020. Governor Lamont issued a number of Executive Orders during the month of May, but the Executive Order that had the greatest effect on the economy was Governor Lamont's order of March 20, 2020. This was his "Stay Safe, Stay Home" order.

The March 20th order no-doubt put the nail in the coffin on the 2020 UConn Assessors School. As a result of this Executive Order and the declaration of a public health emergency in Connecticut, UConn was limiting access to and use of its campus facilities and resources by non-university third party entities.

The annual Assessors' School was initially postponed from June 1, 2020 to August 10, 2020 and then finally cancelled on the UConn campus for 2020 entirely. This was the first time that the school was not held at the UConn campus since the school started in 1944.

CAAO Offers and the Education Committee felt it was very important that the annual Assessors School continue to promote education growth for all of their members. They were planning to have the annual school for CCMA classes only. The workshop sessions were cancelled. All of the CCMA classes would be offered and held at various locations. The decision to let everyone know where and when the classes would take place would be by the beginning of July 2020.

It was reported in the August 2020 *Assessoreporter* that after much work by many of CAAO's dedicated officers and Committee members, the UConn School for 2020 had to be cancelled for this year.

The 2021 annual UConn Assessors School was facing the same limiting access to the UConn campus. So other arrangements had to be made. The CCMA courses were held in a virtual mode. The workshop sessions were offered in a hybrid format. Classes for the workshop were staggered. Workshops were June 1st to 4th at the Courtyard Hotel, in Cromwell; social distancing was required at of the workshop sessions. CCMA courses 1a, 2a, and 4 were held June 7th to 11th and CCMA courses 1b, 2b and 3 were held June 14th to 18th, all in a virtual mode.

After a two-year hiatus, due to the COVIC-19 pandemic, the 2022 UConn Assessors School was held on the University campus. Both the workshop sessions and the CCMA classes were held in person.

2021 Assessors School Workshop Session

(August 2021 Assessoreporter photo)

Social distancing was the order of the day at the 2021 Assessors School Workshop session held June 1st to 4th. The workshop was held at the Courtyard Hotel in Cromwell due to the COVID-19 restriction on the UConn campus. There were approximately 50 in person and 75 virtual attendees for the particular workshop. All 50 were not in the picture due to social distancing.

2021 CAAO Fall Symposium

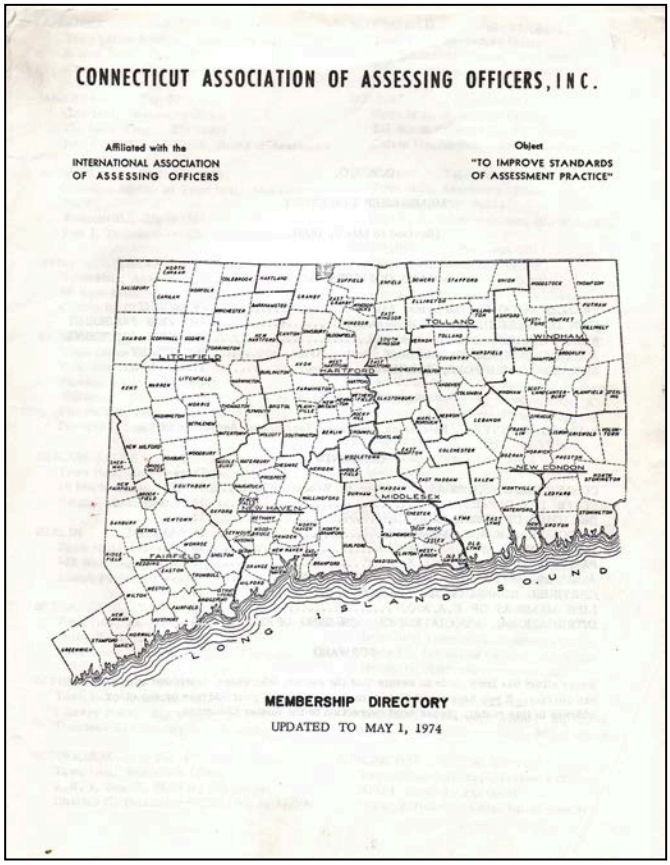
Note: The following information is presented to document the happenings of the 2021 CAAO Fall Symposium and the effects that COVID-19 had on it.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption to a number of CAAO events, education programs and meetings during 2020. As a result, the 2021 Fall Symposium was an effort to get functions back to some sort of normality. Held September 30, 2021 at the Courtyard Cromwell in Cromwell, Connecticut the event went on as scheduled.

Restrictions associated with the attendance at the Fall Symposium included the following: In-person attendance was limited to 50 people maximum, including presenters and moderators. If you were part of the virtual viewing, in order to receive continuing credits, you had to have your video on at all times, facing the camera fully in view, use office or home computer, and you were expected to respond to prompts. Anybody that was out of their chair over five minutes increments would not receive credit. There were 75 virtual attendees.

As you can see, the difficulty of presenting an education program, such as the Fall Symposium, during this time was most challenging. Restriction on attendance and the safe guard of class credits goes beyond the normal presentation of an educational program. One positive note was that the 2021 Fall Symposium was free for CAAO members.

1974 CAAO Membership Roster Compared to 2022


CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF ASSESSING OFFICERS, INC.

Affiliated with the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ASSESSING OFFICERS

Object "TO IMPROVE STANDARDS OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICE"

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

UPDATED TO MAY 1, 1974

The 1974 Membership Directory[2], shown on the left, is a summary of the CAAO membership, as it existed in that year. It includes assessors, board of assessors, associates members and subscribing members. The Directory was updated to May 1, 1974. That date has an important significance for which we will elaborate later in the article. But, let us first review the composition of the 1974 membership.

Of the 169 towns in Connecticut the 1974 Membership Directory lists boards of assessors accounting for 60 of the total. Single head assessors accounted for 109. Associates members accounted for 17 and subscribing members accounted for 51. The difference between associates members and subscribing members is that associates members had some connection with the assessing profession. The subscribing members are strictly associated with the corporate world. A further breakdown of the single head assessors in the 1974 Membership Directory included women head assessors accounting for seven percent of the total.

Another interesting aspect of the 1974 Directory is the number of Subscribing Members. The vast majority of these members were associated with major corporations as tax representatives. Some of their titles included: Tax Representative, Manager Property Tax, Director of Taxes, Property Tax Representative, Vice President Taxes, Corporate Tax Director, Tax Agent, Tax Administrator and Senior Tax Agent. Tax Representatives, during this time were frequent visitors at the annual state assessors meetings, UConn Assessors School and frequent visitors at the local assessor offices.

Fast-forward to 2022 the CAAO membership had completely changed. One of the major factors that affected the makeup of the assessors' position in Connecticut was the passage of Public Act 74-255. The provisions of this act establish the certification of Connecticut Assessors. On October 23, 1974, five months after the 1974 CAAO Membership Directory was printed, 35 Connecticut Assessors received their Certified Connecticut Municipal

[2] The 1974 Membership Directory can be found on the CAAO web site, listed under the Research/Historian Committee.

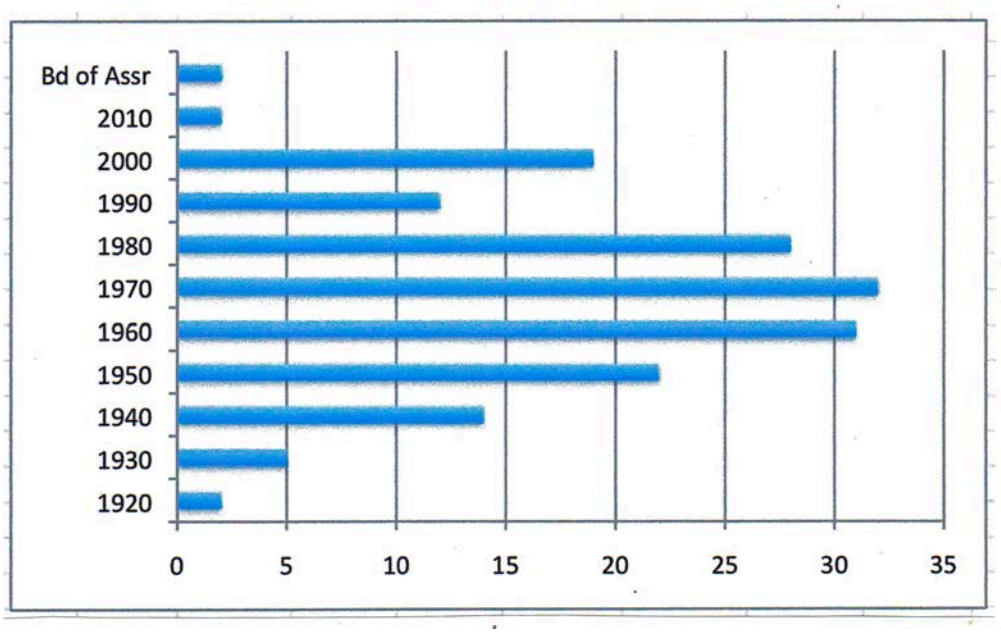
Assessor certificates. As time passed, the complexity of the assessor's office became more demanding and time consuming. The need for professional trained assessors became apparent as many of the boards, most of which were part-time, were unable to handle the workload and complex tasks.

Further down the road was the passage of Public Act 95-283, it required the grand list of each municipality to be signed by a certified assessor starting with the grand list of October 1, 2000. The laws affected the hiring of new assessors and the certification of existing assessors. No longer could municipalities hire the local politician who was not certified.

Taking a look at the head assessors' position in 2022.[3] The March 2022 CAAO Town Directory includes 162 single head assessors of which 159 hold the CCMA I or CCMA II certification. In three municipalities the directory shows no certification for those assessors. These are small communities. As of March 2022, there are seven vacant assessors' positions. There are three municipalities that have a board of assessors with a certified assessor in a full or part time position. The biggest change is the position of head assessor being occupied by women. Women assessors represent 57 percent of all head assessors in the 169 towns.

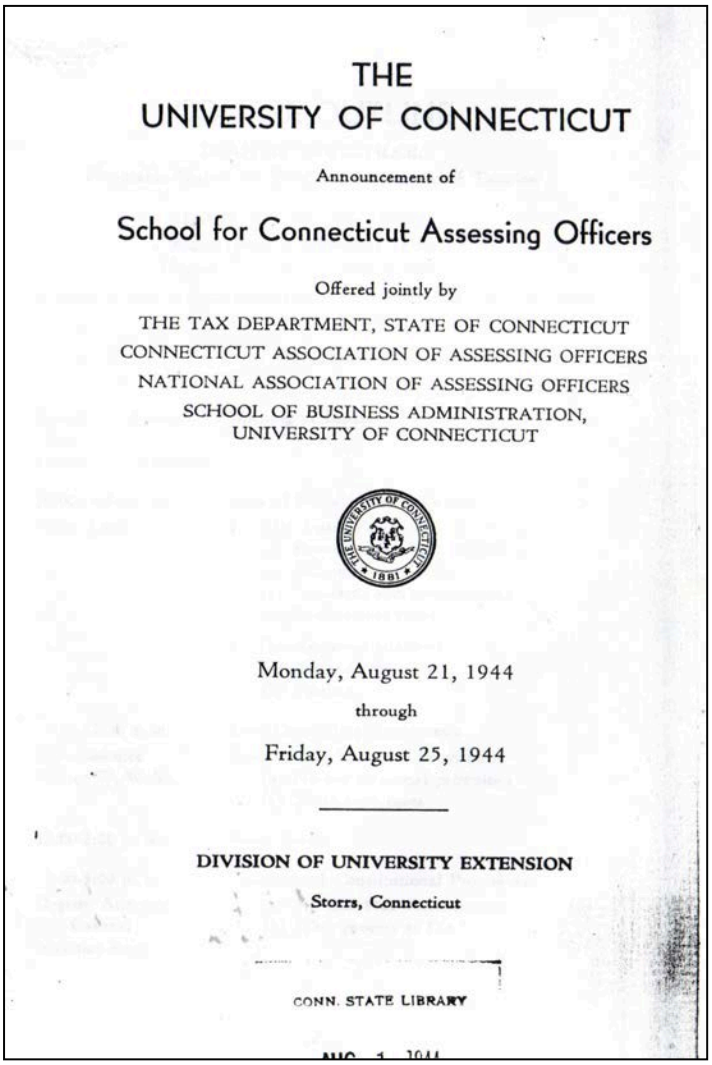
Single Head Assessor Appointments in Each Decade (Men and Women)

Decade:	1920s,	1930s,	1940s,	1950s,	1960s,	1970s,	1980s,	1990s,	2000s,	2010s,	Only Brd. of Assr.
Number:	2	5	14	22	31	32	28	12	19	2	2



[3] Information taken from the *CAAO Town Directory* on the CAAO website

First Assessors School Brochure Cover



THE
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Announcement of

School for Connecticut Assessing Officers

Offered jointly by

THE TAX DEPARTMENT, STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF ASSESSING OFFICERS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ASSESSING OFFICERS
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION,
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Monday, August 21, 1944
through
Friday, August 25, 1944

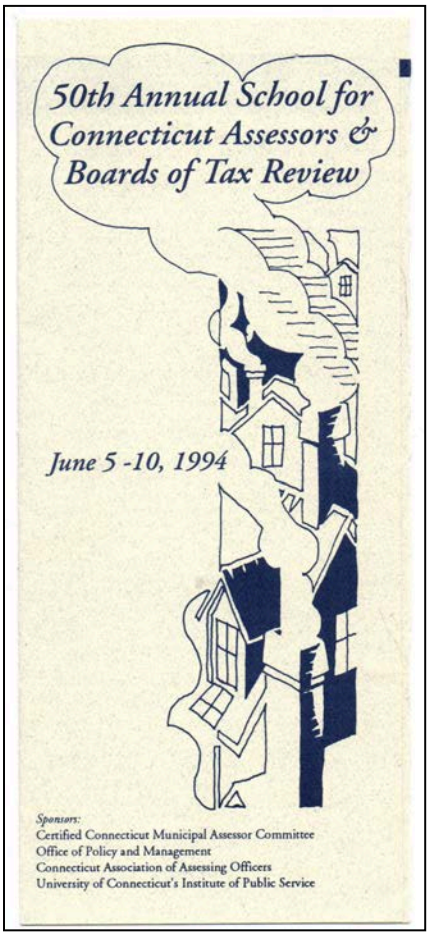
DIVISION OF UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Storrs, Connecticut

CONN. STATE LIBRARY

1944 Officers of the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers
Herbert K. Shay, *President,* Fairfield
Walter E. Savage, *Vice-President*, Meriden
Fred G. Prothero, *Secretary-Treasure*, Norwich

1944 Executive Board
William F. Connelly, Bridgeport
Philip J. McLean, New Haven
John J. Tynan, Middletown
Norman H. Miller, New London
August Wehrle, Thomaston
George F. Kinsella, Hartford
Lester Russell, Stafford Springs
Ulric D. Beausoleil, Putnam

50th Annual Assessors School Brochure Cover



1994 Officers of the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers

Anthony J. Homicki, *President*, Newington
Francis J. Barta, *1st Vice President,* Wallingford
Joan E. Paskewich *2nd Vice President,* Windham
Janice A. Steinmetz, *Treasure,* Somers
Melissa, H. Bonin, *Secretary,* Killingly

1994 County Representatives

Al Garzi, Ridgefield
Steven Kosofsky, Windsor
Mary Ringuette, Barkhamsted
Donna Shanoff, Killingworth
Dennis Hlavac, Wallingford
Anne Dougherty, Groton
Emily M. Kasacek, Ashford
Rande Chmura, Putnam

50th Anniversary of UConn Assessors School June 5-10, 1994

This picture was taken on the hill in front of Shippee Hall at the 50th annual assessors school. When School Director Edward Sembor announced that the picture would be taken on the hill everyone knew exactly where to go. Shippee Hall was the dorm for assessors for many years at the University of Connecticut assessors school.

No Awards Given at Fall Meeting

There were no awards given at the 2005 annual CAAO Fall Meeting. Why? There were no nominations sent to the Awards Committee. There is nothing in the By-Laws or the procedures that say all of the Awards must be given every year, but you would think that there was someone who is deserving of recognition in some way. Awards Chairperson reminded members should not assume that someone else has already sent in a nomination.

Women Assessors Measuring Up

The following article was printed in the July 1982 Assessoreporter. It was co-authored by five Connecticut women assessors namely: Joan Holbrook, Westbrook; Gloria Kovac, New Canaan; Anne Kovall, Harwinton; Linda Roig, Weston; and Mary Lou Strom, Granby.

There was a time when the tape measure was used by woman mainly for measuring fabrics. Now, a 100-foot tape roll is stuffed into a women's handbag or tote, as she leaves her office to make a home inspection. She is the town assessor.

Women participating in assessment work is not something new. There is, however, a sudden spiraling of women to the field in the past ten years.

The duties of an assessor do not demand any particular brawn, other than occasionally wading through mud, jumping over a ditch, dodging construction equipment, or soothing a representative from the canine community. This observation does not lessen respect for the tiring demands of field work. There is great satisfaction derived from it. Besides, how many other jobs afford the opportunity of gathering some permits and a measuring wheel, and getting out of the office when spring fever hits.

Assessors' obligations, on the other hand, require intelligence, maintenance of that innate attribute: common sense, a good deal of patience, and, of course, adequate training in the fundamentals of property valuation, the heart of assessing.

Two hundred nine individuals attended the 1981 UConn Assessors School, and ninety-one of these students were women. The increase number of females at the school emphasizes another fact pertinent to the assessor's office. Unlike the private sector, an assessment clerk or secretary must be professionally trained. Excellent office skills are not enough. If an assessor's office is to run effectively and efficiently, the clerical staff must also be well schooled in the laws, procedures, and practices of assessing.

Women, as well as men, new to assessing have been shown by their experienced counterparts, that there is no short cut to knowledge and technique. They have to, consequently, invest time and study into courses on assessment practices and real estate. They soon realize the responsibility behind their "odyssey into taxation."

The assessing profession is, most assuredly, for a woman. The women are here, along with the men, to experience the many incidents in the life of an assessor; coping with the sensitive decision of removal of a senior citizen from the elderly program, or enduring supplemental motor vehicle battle fatigue. The frustration of dealing with six different interpretations of new legislation is easily balanced with the satisfaction of helping an equally frustrated taxpayer cut through bureaucratic red tape to resolve a complicated tax problem.

Women are happy to be a part; be it pleasurable or trying. Moreover, male assessors are progressive in their attitude toward their female colleagues. In the past, intelligent, capable women were recognized, respected, and expected to be an asset to the assessor. In the present, they are encouraged to be an assessor.

Maybe the inquisitive looks from taxpayers, contractors, and others change when a women announces, "I am the Assessor," but the respect is there, despite an occasional innocuous remark. And there are those trying moments when confronted with the question, "where is the assessor, and when will he be back?"

The job of an assessor touches on the fields of real estate, appraising, building, mapping, public relations, accounting, and social services, to name a few. The diversification of duties that this office requires makes it an interesting and rewarding job.

Assessing is being standardized by virtue of the experiences and practices of Connecticut Assessors. Assessing uniformity is definitely gaining momentum in the state. It is undoubtedly evident that all Connecticut Assessors subscribe to the same thought of perseverance in bringing credit upon this profession.

Connecticut State Register and Manual

Year	Assessors	# Male	# Female
1945-1946	475	467 (98.3%)	8 (1.7%)
1965	398	355 (89.2%)	43 (10.8%)
1981	321	247 (76.9%)	74 (23.1%)

The above figures represent both an increase in female assessors and a trend toward paid professional assessors rather than an elected board.

******

First Women CCMAs

Pictured on the left are the first women to receive their Certified Connecticut Municipal Assessor certification. They include former Wilton Assessor Ruth Nytvedt on the left and former member of the Easton Board of Assessors Virginia Wilson on the right. Both women received their CCMAs on October 23, 1974 at a special certification ceremony at the State Capital

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF ASSESSING OFFICERS, INC.

Object
"TO IMPROVE STANDARDS OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICE"

Affiliated with the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ASSESSING OFFICERS

SPRING MEETING

DATE: Thursday, May 10, 1973

TIME: 9:30 A.M.

PLACE: Yankee Silversmith
North Colony Rd., Wallingford, Conn.
Exit 66, Wilbur Cross-Merritt Pkwys.

MENU

Assorted Crackers
Fresh Seafood Cocktail w/Shrimp
Roast Sirloin of Beef
Oven Roast Potatoes-String Beans Almondine
Assorted Hot Bread and Rolls
Lemon Ambrosia Pie
Beverage

$6.00

ATTENTION

All members should make every effort to attend. This year has seen many proposals in the State Legislature that effect every Connecticut Assessor. This is the time to get together and have a good exchange of views.

Be an active member--attend your Association meetings.

The 1973 CAAO Spring meeting was an important meeting. The Thomas J. Meskill tax reform package was being presented to the public and the State Legislators. There were many changes in the pipeline that would affect the assessing community. How could you go wrong for $6.00?

1948 Assessors School Roster

Listed below is the roster for the 1948 University of Connecticut Annual Assessors School. This was the fifth school. The Assessors School began on August 21, 1944. Of the 43 listed on the roster, 21 are members of boards of assessors. There are seven single head assessors. Except for the two assessor instructors, William F. Connelly of Bridgeport and Herbert K. Shay of Fairfield, the other assessors listed on the roster have been head assessors for a short time. The longevity of those assessors include, Frederick Davis of Waterford, head assessor for four years, Evert Engstrom of Stonington head assessor for two years, M. Francis Heberger of Milford, head assessor for one year, Aldro Jenks of Waterbury, head assessor for four years and Horace White of Windsor, head assessor for one year. *Note: The roster, shown below, has been retyped due to the clarity of the original document. Added: date assessor was appointed shown with POSITION.*

Institute of Public Service
University of Connecticut

Roster

School for Connecticut Assessing Officers

July 12-15, 1948

NAME	POSITION	TOWN
Charles M. Anderson	Board of Assessors	North Haven
Sterling E. Bristol	Board of Assessors	Canton
John A. Burdick	Board of Assessors	Westbrook
Samuel W. Clinton	Board of Assessors	North Haven
William F. Connelly	Tax Assessor (Instructor) (1925)	Bridgeport
Clarence S. Cook	Board of Assessors	Bristol
Kathryn R. Cowles	Realtors	Hartford
Frederick T. Davis	Assessor (1944)	Waterford
William H. Deane	Board of Assessors	Hamden
Robert L. Dunn	Board of Assessors	Derby
A. E. Durrschmidt	Board of Assessors	Shelton
Evert E. Engstrom	Assessor (1947)	Stonington
Frank Flood	Attorney General's Office	Hartford
Leon W. Gregg	Board of Assessors	Westbrook
Frank J. Grillo	Realtor	Hartford

Continued next page

NAME	POSITION	TOWN
M. Francis Heberger	Assessor (1948)	Milford
Harry R. Holland Jr.	Board of Assessors	Newington
Lee H. Houle	Board of Assessors	Stafford
Aldro Jenks	Assessor (Instructor) (1944)	Waterbury
Henry J. Latham	Board of Assessors	Groton
Joseph M. Loughlin	Director, Institute of Public Service	Storrs
Robert L. Mason	Board of Tax Review	Rocky Hill
Lawrence McKeon	Appraisal Engineer (Instructor)	Bridgeport
Benjamin H. Menke	Board of Assessors	Thomaston
Leigh D. Minor	Board of Assessors	Bristol
Felix Montano	Board of Assessors	Rocky Hill
F. Robert Mount	Board of Tax Review	Newtown
Harold T. Murray	Dir. Municipal Division, State Tax Department	Hartford
H. D. Pomeroy	Assessment Engineer	West Hartford
C. F. Rowland	Board of Assessors	Prospect
Robert Eaton Saunders	Tax Commissioner	Darien
Rowland A. Schwebel	Personal Property Accountant	Norwalk
Herbert K. Shay	Assessor (Instructor) (1940)	Fairfield
Fred A. Smith	Socony-Vacuum Oil Co.	Albany, N. Y.
Roy G. Spescha	Asst. Tax Commissioner	Norwalk
Ernest C. L. Stoeckert	Clerk, Board of Assessors	Torrington
Michael Svihra	Board of Assessors	Easton
George H. Tower	Board of Assessors	Newtown
Horace W. White	Assessor (1948)	Windsor
A. H. Williams	Assistant Assessor	Fairfield
John B. Wright	Board of Assessors	Canton
Alfred J. Lorenzi	Board of Assessors	New Haven
Philip J. McLean	Board of Assessors	New Haven

Presidents of CAAO 1935 to 2026

Year	Assessor/President	Municipality	County
2025-2026	Jennifer Lineaweaver	Stonington	New London
2023-2024	Mary Gardner	Groton	New London
2021-2022	Thomas DeNoto	Bristol	Hartford
2019-2020	Shawna Baron	Cromwell	Middlesex
2017-2018	Chandler Rose	Wethersfield	Hartford
2015-2016	John Rainaldi	Manchester	Hartford
2013-2014 **	Stuart Topliff	Rocky Hill	Hartford
2012	Charles P. Danna, Jr.	South Windsor	Hartford
2011	Walter E. Topliff, Jr.	Bloomfield	Hartford
2009-10	David M. Dietsch	Waterbury	New Haven
2007-08	Carolyn Nadeau	Watertown	Litchfield
2006	Patricia G. Hedwall	Madison	New Haven
2005	Marsha L. Standish	Stonington	New London
2004	James W. Clynes	Hamden	New Haven
2003	Joseph C. Ferraro	Berlin	Hartford
2002	Robin L. O'Loughlin	Deep River	New London
2001	John J. Chaponis	Colchester	New London
2000	Charles B. Feldman	West Haven	New Haven
1999	Steven Hodgetts	Meriden	New Haven
1998	Melissa H. Bonin	Killingly	Windham
1997	William H. Gaffney, III	Milford	New Haven
1996	Michael A. Bekech	Manchester	Hartford
1995	Joan E. Paskewich	Windham	Windham
1993-94	Anthony J. Homicki	Newington	Hartford
1992	Walter A. Lawrence	Tolland	Tolland
1991	Mary Lou Strom	Granby	Hartford
1990	Charles G. Agli, Jr.	New Britain	Hartford
1989	John J. Dagata	Wethersfield	Hartford
1988	Catherine G. Daboll	East Lyme	New London
1987	James G. Ramos	Waterford	New London
1986	Thomas F. Browne, Jr.	Fairfield	Fairfield
1985	Robert F. Coyne	Milford	New Haven
1984	Gordon M. Donley	New Canaan	Fairfield
1983	S. Steven Juda	New Haven	New Haven
1982	William J. Coughlin, Jr.	Rocky Hill	Hartford
1981	Edward F. Clifford	New Haven	New Haven

Year	Assessor/President	Municipality	County
1980	Thomas A. Fitzpatrick	Fairfield	Fairfield
1979	Francis G. Callahan	Stonington	New London
1978	William Morgan, Jr.	North Stonington	New London
1977	Alexander F. Standish	Hartford	Hartford
1976	Joseph A. Cullen	Darien	Fairfield
1975	John D. Killeen	Enfield	Hartford
1974	Francis McTigue	Old Lyme	New London
1974 *	Harry J. Cohen	New Haven	New Haven
1973	Edgar Belleville	Manchester	Hartford
1972	William H. Werfelman	Redding	Fairfield
1971	Francis J. Buckley, Jr.	East Lyme	New London
1970	Francis K. Kirwin	East Hartford	Hartford
1969	Charles J. Sweeney	Hamden	New Haven
1968	C. Barton Smith	Torrington	Litchfield
1967	John W. Killeen	Groton	New London
1965-66	Richard L. Prendergast	South Windsor	Hartford
1964	Walter Birck	Old Saybrook	Middlesex
1963	Robert C. Kemp	Wallingford	New Haven
1962	Ralph Carter	Glastonbury	Hartford
1961	Borden V. Mahoney	Hartford	Hartford
1960	M. Francis Heberger	Guilford	New Haven
1959	Howard E. King	Farmington	Hartford
1958	Catherine E. Pardee	Orange	New Haven
1957	Frederick Newton	Hartford	Hartford
1954-56	Henry Smalley	Wethersfield	Hartford
1953	Evert A. Engstrom	Stonington	New London
1952	Charles Tremper	New Haven	New Haven
1951	Frederick T. Davis	Waterford	New London
1950	Aldro Jenks	Waterbury	New Haven
1949	Norman Miller	New London	New London
1947-48	Philip McLean	New Haven	New Haven
1941-46	Herbert K. Shay	Fairfield	Fairfield
1940	John J. Tynan	Middletown	Middlesex
1937-39	William F. Connelly	Bridgeport	Fairfield
1935-36	George F. Kinsella	Hartford	Hartford

* Harry J. Cohen assessor of New Haven was nominated CAAO president for 1974 but passed away on November 5, 1973. At the November 29, 1973 CAAO fall meeting; Mr. Cohen was voted president posthumously.
** Stuart Topliff was the first of the two-year term CAAO presidents, per CAAO by-law change in 2012.

For a brief history of the CAAO presidents, review the article *Presidential Facts* in Volume #3 *History of Connecticut Assessors*, page 16-17 on the CAAO website (caao.com) under the Historian Committee.

Charlestown Golden Girls

Pictured above is a group of Connecticut women assessors know as the Charlestown Golden Girls. The picture was taken in 2013 at Vivian Bachteler's cottage in Charlestown Rhode Island. It was the 20th and final gathering at Vivian's cottage of the Charlestown Golden Girls. They met for the Columbus Day weekend because they were all working and that was a three–day holiday for most of them. The picture includes: Sitting Vivian Bachteler, standing left to right Joan Paskewich, Donna Ralston, Janice Steinmetz, Donna Price Bekech, Emily Kasacek, Jane Grigsby, Joan Robinson and Catherine Daboll.

History of the group as told by former Rocky Hill Assessor Vivian Bachteler.

It all actually began in 1990, when I was the new assessor in Rocky Hill and going to my first NRAAO conference, which happened to be held in Atlantic City that year. I had made a couple of friends in the assessment community who were also attending, and we wanted to travel together to New Jersey. I put out a request through the hotline, looking for anyone who would like to travel with us, and nine assessors responded. We finally settled on a limo for transportation and eight women (including assessors and my sister Linda) and Walt Lawrence signed on for the trip. Charlie Danna took up the tenth seat on the return trip home. From that date forward, Catherine always called us "Sir Walter and His Harem".
Continued next page

My husband and I acquired the cottage in 1994. By then, I worked frequently with folks within CAAO and "bonded" with several assessors who eventually were known as the Golden Girls. I had invited them all down to the cottage for a three-day weekend in October and the rest is history. The four-bedroom cottage was not very fancy, but all of us had a bed. There was so much laughter, camaraderie, and of course wine. I was designated driver for most of our outings, and we found many interesting places to explore.

Of the eight of us, seven were assessors, and one, a deputy assessor. All were in the original group except for Donna Bekech, who joined us just a little later, sort of "replacing" Donna Ralston.

For the most part, everyone stayed for the entire weekend every year. One year, I actually did not arrive until the second day because I was in a play in our community theatre and production was that weekend. Everyone knew where the key was, and I was the latecomer.

We celebrated Joan Robinson's birthday on October 10th at the cottage every year. We were also there together when we received news of Bill Coughlin's passing. There's nothing like a sisterhood during happy and sad times. We laughed and cried together often.

We celebrated our twentieth weekend in 2013, and the cottage was sold in August of 2014. I sure do miss those times. The group is still very active; we try to get together whenever we can. I will always think of the cottage as the home of the Charlestown Golden Girls.

******

Dorothy W.Y. Duncan State's First Woman Assessor

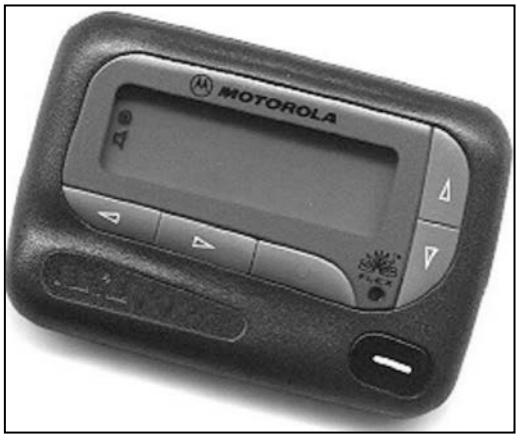
Dorothy Winthrop Young Duncan of Old Saybrook was the first woman assessor in the state of Connecticut. She was a member of the Old Saybrook Board of Assessors from 1941 to 1949. Mrs. Duncan passed away October 15, 1995 at the age of 93. She was born and raised in Old Saybrook all her life. She was a direct descendant of John Winthrop, the state's first governor.

Besides serving on the board of assessors, Dorothy was a clerk at the town's probate court for several years. In addition, she worked for many years at the George Kirtland Insurance firm, was an active member and held offices in many organizations, including the Old Saybrook Colony Founders Association, the Old Saybrook Historical Society, the Friends of the Action Library and the town's women club.

Other women who served as assessors in the 1940s include Alice Darling who was a member of the Mansfield Board of Assessors 1944 to 1970, Catherine Pardee who served on the Orange Board of Assessors 1947 to 1958 and Madaleine Weingart who served on the Harwinton Board of Assessors 1949 to 1970.

Beepers Pagers and Telephone Booths

Telephone Booth



Motorola Pager/Beeper

What do telephone booths and pagers have to do with assessing? Before email and texting there were pagers, portable mini radiofrequency devices that allowed for instant human contact. Invented in 1921, pagers—or "beepers" as they are also known—reached their heyday in the 1980s and 1990s. To have one hanging from a belt loop, shirt pocket, or purse strap was to convey a certain kind of status—that of a person important enough to be reached at a moment's notice. As an assessor, you spend many hours out in the field doing home inspection, measuring and reviewing property. If the office wanted to contact you, they would dial the number assigned to the pager and a beeping sound would start, displaying a return number to call. The next step, the assessor would have to find a telephone booth to return the call. Today, it would be very hard to find a telephone booth. With the event of the cell phone, contact and conversations are there for the calling. Oh yes, another item you must have for the telephone booth is change for the pay telephone.

******

First Fall Symposium

The following is a rewrite of an article that appeared in the September / October 1995 issue of the Assessoreporter on page 3. The article is about the first CAAO Fall Symposium. The historical significance of the article gives credit to Anne Dougherty, then assessor in Groton for her efforts in coordinating the first Symposium. The other noteworthy point in the article is in the last sentence that mentions that the Executive Board voted at their last meeting to make the Fall Symposium an annual event.

Fall Symposium Held

A Fall educational symposium on market economics, assessment statistics, state and local government and the courts was held on September 13, 1995. It was sponsored by the In-Service Training Committee and coordinated through the efforts of Anne Dougherty. It featured four mini-seminars and a lunchtime display of services offered by various venders.

Continued next page

First Fall Symposium continued

Mr. Nicholas Perna, Director of Economic Research for Shawmut bank, started the event off with a talk on the economic forecast of Connecticut. He said nationally that the interest rates will remain basically stable for the next twelve months, and that inflation will remain low. The outlook for the nation as a whole is fairly good; however it is fairly benign for Connecticut.

He said that there are three things that we need to do:

1.We have to improve our infrastructure, because even if we add jobs, we couldn't get to work.

2. We have to cut cost. We are about 10% over the national average, while fast growth states are 5% to 10% below the national average.

3. We are a state without a destination. We don't know where we want to be in five years.

Jim Ramos, Assessor of Waterford, concluded the morning session with a presentation on assessment statistics. He discussed the difference between descriptive and inferential statistics as well as several other aspects that will become part and parcel to our job as assessors in the near future.

The afternoon session began with a talk by Jim Pelligrino, Chairman of the Connecticut Institute for Management Studies, on Government in the "90s and beyond". Mr. Pelligrino said that life will never be as it was before; that in the past few years we have witnessed a structural change not a cyclical change. He said one of the major reasons for the lag in Connecticut was that the defense industry and commercial aerospace were hit at the same time.

The symposium was concluded with a presentation from William Coughlin, John Valente, Linda Riog and Donna Shanoff on how to prepare for court and several recent court cases. One of the main emphases of this talk was that you can never be over prepared for court.

The lunchtime display of vender wares and services concentrated on CAMA systems and peripheral software. Over 15 venders attended. The Executive Board voted at its last meeting to make this an annual event.

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CAAO Members That Have Worked in the Revaluation Field

This is an update to the original listing of Connecticut assessors who at one time worked as full time employees for a revaluation company. The report does not abstract all of the companies or municipalities that the person worked for. The original report, listing 93 assessors that worked in the revaluation field full time can be found in Volume #3, page 58-69, *History of Connecticut Assessors* on the CAAO web site under Research / Historian Committee.

* Worked for more than one revaluation company or municipality.

Name	**Revaluation Company**	**Municipality**
Lawrence, Jason	Lesher-Glendinning Munic. Serv.*	Tolland
Angel Johnstone	Vision Appraisal	Canterbury, Lisbon *
Todd Helems	Vision Appraisal	Enfield

Historical Facts about Connecticut Assessors

The CAAO President who served the longest was Fairfield Assessor Herbert Shay. He served from 1941 to 1946.

The first woman CAAO President was Orange Assessor Catherine Pardee. She was CAAO President in 1958.

The first Connecticut Assessors to receive IAAO's Certified Assessor Evaluator (CAE) designations were Waterbury Assessor Aldro Jenks in 1952 and Orange Assessor Catherine Pardee in 1957±.

Connecticut Assessors who have been president of IAAO include, William F. Connelly of Bridgeport 1938 to 1939, Aldro Jenks of Waterbury 1947 to 1948, Herbert K. Shay of Fairfield 1956 to 1957, Robert J. Flanagan of New London 1978 to 1979 and Frederick M. Chmura from State of Connecticut OPM 2003 to 2004.

The person who has served the longest as the assessor in one community is Bloomfield Assessor Peter Marsele, who served for 53 years from 1952 to 2005.

Family related assessors that have served as presidents of CAAO include Alexander Standish 1977 and Marsha Standish 2005 husband and wife, James Ramos 1987 and Joan Paskewich 1995 husband and wife, John W. Killeen 1967 and John D. Killeen 1975 father and son and Walter Topliff, Jr. 2011 and Stuart Topliff 2013-2014 brothers.

The first two women to receive their Certified Connecticut Municipal Assessor (CCMAs) Certifications were former Wilton Assessor Ruth Nytvedt and former Easton Board of Assessors member Virginia Wilson. Both assessors received their CCMAs on October 23, 1974.

Five CAAO members received the *Assessor of the Year Award* more than once. This include, Carolyn Nadeau, former assessor of Watertown and Bethlehem who received the award in 2006 and 2014, Donna Ralston former assessor of Norwich and East Hampton who received the award 1993 and 2010, Joseph Dakers, Sr. of West Hartford who received the award in 2007 and 2018, Patrick J.J. Sullivan of West Hartford Property Appraiser III received the award in 2009, 2022 and 2024 and Shawna Marie Baron of Cromwell received the award 2013 and 2024.

Two assessors that have worked in two different municipalities for 20 years or more include: Harry DerAsadourian of Avon and Canton, and Mildred Peringer of Preston and Voluntown.

The first assessors appointed to the CCMA Committee in 1974 by Tax Commissioner F. George Brown include: Walter Birck of Old Saybrook and Essex, Edward Clifford of New Haven, Joseph Cullen of Darien, Robert Flanagan of New London, Robert Kemp of Wallingford and Richard Prendergast, agent for the State Tax Department.

Continued next page

Historical Facts about Connecticut Assessors continue
Bloomfield Assessor Peter Marsele was the only assessor to serve on the 1972 Governor Thomas Meskill Commission on Tax Reform. The Commission dealt with many of the laws that assessors deal with on a daily basis today. They include a uniform assessment date and fiscal year, uniform percent of assessment, certification of assessors, establish a system of computer-assisted reassessments, a system of sales ratio studies and establish the elderly circuit breaker program.

William F. Connelly, Bridgeport Assessor from 1925 to 1948 was appointed Connecticut State Tax Commissioner October 15, 1948 to fill the unexpired term of then Tax Commissioner Walter Walsh through July 1, 1949. Mr. Connelly was reappointed Tax Commissioner March 1, 1951 to March 1, 1955. Mr. Connelly was president of CAAO from 1937 to 1939 and IAAO President in 1939.

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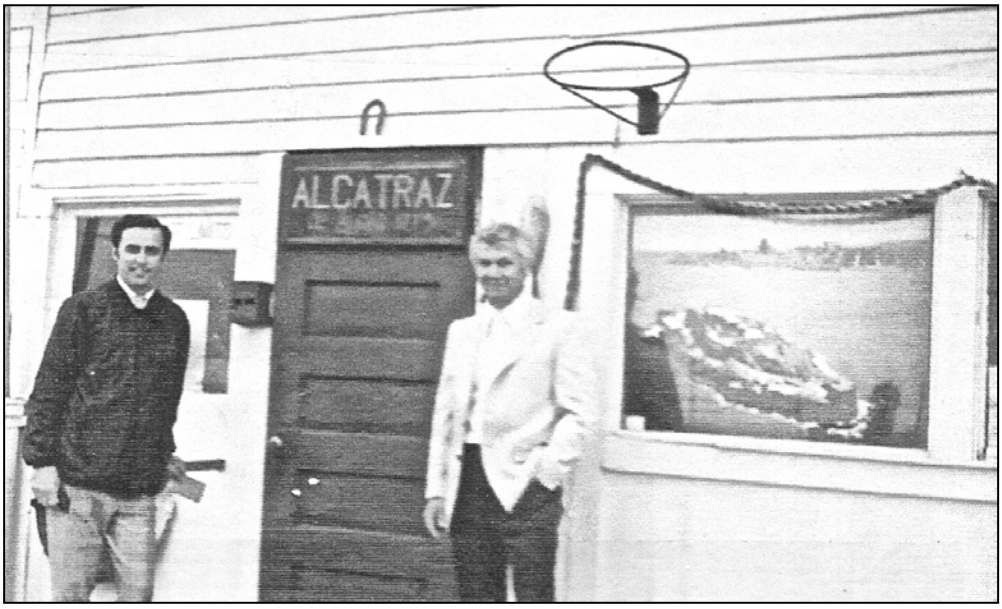
Assessoreporter Wins IAAO Zangerle Award



At the 1974 IAAO conference held in San Francisco, Paul Slattery, of the New Haven assessor's office on the left and former Newington Assessor Buddy Bayus on the right, took a side trip to Alcatraz Prison. Paul was at the conference to accept the IAAO Zangerle Award for the *Assessoreporter* as the best state newsletter for 1974. The award was originally framed, but later rolled up and filed with other assessor's historical documents at the UConn Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

How Technology Brought Assessors Together During COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers had an assortment of electronic programs that allowed for an organized transfer of information between its membership. Come COVID-19, much of that changed. The following article gives a brief summary of how CAAO met the challenge of bringing the membership together.

Existing Electronics

In Volume #3 on the *History of Connecticut Assessors*, page 29, there is an article entitled, *Assessment Functions Go Electronic.* The article summarizes the various CAAO assessing functions that have transferred existing hard copy of documents into electronic formatting. Some of the assessing functions that have gone electronic included, the *Assessoreporter*, *Handbook for Connecticut Assessors*, *Membership Directory*, voting, motor vehicle online access, and last but not least, the CAAO computer.

Timetable of COVID-19 in Connecticut

On January 21, 2020, the country became concerned with the first laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States in the state of Washington. Connecticut's first positive case for COVID-19 was announced on March 8, 2020. Due to increases of the COVID-19 cases in Connecticut, Governor Ned Lamont started issuing executive orders on March 10, 2020 proclaiming a state of emergency throughout the State of Connecticut. Over the next couple of weeks, Governor Lamont issued an order-prohibiting gatherings of five people or more for social and recreational activities. On March 15, 2020 he issued an Executive Order cancelling classes in public schools. The Executive Order that had the greatest effect on everyday life was the Governor's order of March 20, 2020. This was his "Stay Safe, Stay Home" order. On May 5, 2020, Governor Lamont announced that all public schools would remain closed for the rest of the academic year.

Zoom Brings People Together

With town halls and restaurants closed and the order for people to physically distance from each other, CAAO meetings and seminars started to be canceled in the early part of March 2020. It was at this point that the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers made plans to set up a communication platform using Zoom[4]. The following are some of the situations that allowed Connecticut assessors to participate in meetings and gatherings.

Executive Board Meetings

The Executive Board held a special meeting via Zoom on April 13th and 14th, 2020. The purpose of the meeting dealt with time sensitive matters and the purchase of Zoom for CAAO activities. The purchase was approved. The first regular schedule Executive Board meeting via Zoom was held on June 2, 2020. Executive Board meetings continued via Zoom through April 12, 2022. A few of the Executive Board meetings were held in person during this period. They included: November 5, 2020 Annual Fall Meeting and Executive Board meeting September 16, 2021 at the Shuttle Meadows Country Club in Berlin.

[4] Zoom is a video conferencing platform that can be used through a computer or mobile app, and allows users to connect online for video conference meetings, webinars and live chats.

Assessors School

The 2020 annual Assessors School was postponed from May 31, 2020 to August 9, 2020 and then finally cancelled on the UConn campus for 2020 entirely. There was no Assessors School in 2020. The 2021 Assessors School Workshop sessions were held at the Cromwell Courtyard Marriott with social distancing requirements and the first virtual viewing. The CCMA courses were all held virtually.

Fall Symposium

The 2020 Fall Symposium was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. The 2021 Fall Symposium was held at the Cromwell Courtyard Marriott with in-person attendance limited to 50 people maximum, including presenters and moderators. Virtual viewing was available for the first time.

Annual CAAO Meeting

The CAAO Spring meeting was first postponed from May 5, 2020 to June 23, 2020 then cancelled all together. The annual Fall CAAO meeting held November 5, 2020 at Testa's Banquet Facilities in Southington was a combination in-person and first time Zoom event. Those in attendance wore facial masks. The swearing in of new CAAO officers included a historic moment with the swearing in of CAAO Treasurer, Larry LaBarbera, via Zoom.

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New Foundation Being Installed

Pictured on the left is a typical house having a new foundation installed due to the effects of cracking from pyrrhotite in the old foundation. The typical cost runs from $150,000 to $250,000 per house. Most of the problems have occurred in the northeastern part of Connecticut on houses build in the mid 1980s to 1996. CAAO's Research / Historian report on crumbling foundations can be found on CAAO.com under Research/Historian Committee, Volume #5, page 42.

Research/Historian Committee's First Visit to UConn's Dodd Center

Pictured above include, left to right: Edward Dowling, Peter Marsele, Paul Slattery, Archivist Betsy Pittman, Charles Agli, and Alexander Standish.

On March 7, 2006, the CAAO Research/Historian Committee, pictured above, were treated to a rare behind the scenes tour of the UConn Thomas Dodd Research Center. The initial visit included a tour of the research center and a review the status of the submitted material presented by the CAAO Research/Historian Committee. The tour was conducted with University Archivist Betsy Pittman.

Ms. Pittman spent considerable time with the Committee to conduct this grand tour. The tour began with a review of how documents are first brought to the center and put into a -40 degree deepfreeze to eliminate moisture and mold. Next, they are brought to an area where the documents are reviewed, cataloged and entered into the computers. Finally, they are placed into a state of the art storage area where part of the CAAO collection was filed.

The storage racks are approximately two feet by 50 feet, pushed together to maximize the storage area and can be accessed at any point with a push of a button. The three floors of storage are climate controlled to ensure that the documents are in a favorable environment. All documents are open and available to the public in the public library area. However, a high degree of security is strictly enforced to insure the protection and longevity of all of the material that is on file. Currently, visitors are required to book an appointment at least two days in advance of the date they intend to visit. The tour concluded at the Center's conference room where additional CAAO material, not cataloged yet, was available for the Committee review.

Dodd Center visit continued

Other visits to the Dodd Research Center included a visit on August 24, 2009 to review additional material on file, August 9, 2011 to turn over additional material for the CAAO archives files. Also, during that visit Archivist Betsy Pittman was given copies of Volume #1 and #2 on the *History of Connecticut Assessors* and a copy of the *Abstract of the Single Assessors in Connecticut.* On June 4, 2014, two members of the Committee participated in an Assessors School workshop session on natural disasters and assessors' involvement. The Committee members prior to that session made a visit to the Dodd Center and turned over Volume #3 of the *History of Connecticut Assessors.* On June 4, 2018, three members of the Committee visited Archivist Laura Smith to deliver Volume #4, of the *History of Connecticut Assessors.* There were also many other documents from the collection of Edward Dowling delivered to the Dodd Research Center during that visit. Each year, during the annual UConn Assessors School, the previous year copies of the *Assesoreporter* are delivered to the Dodd Research Center to be filed with newsletters already on file.

CAAO Data Line

For those of you who are not familiar with the *CAAO Data Line* here is the scoop. From September 1992 to July 2004, in each issue of the *Assessoreporter* there was a column called the *CAAO Data Line*. The column listed recent sales of unique properties, $1,000,000 or more, which might be of interest to Connecticut Assessors.

The idea of having a state wide sales file was not new. In 1983, Tom Grady CCMA deputy assessor of Waterbury conceived the idea of establishing a state-wide data exchange on sales of $1,000,000 or more. This data exchange would help CAAO members with their court appeals and establishing market values for large commercial, industrial and vacant parcels.

Serving on that committee were Robert Flanagan, CAE, CCMA, MAI, director of real estate and assessor of New London and Al Standish, CAE, CCMA, assistant assessor of Hartford.

At that time the committee was in contact with the Office of Policy and Management. They had received approval to abstract sales from the Office of Policy and Management's sales ratio files. In the July 1983 *Assessoreporter*, Mr. Grady had an article in the newsletter requesting feedback from assessors as to the merits of the committee and whether they can inject some new ideas. *Note: Results of the program were not available at the time of this article.*

It was not until May 1992 that interest in establishing a sales file came up again. In the May-June 1992 *Assessoreporter* Editors Corner, there was an announcement that plans were being made by CAAO to maintain a central base for all unique sales within the state. In the July-August 1992 *Assessoreporter*, a data form was placed in the newsletter requesting sales of unique properties. As a result of that data form, five unique sales were submitted for the first CAAO Data Line column in the September-October 1992 *Assessoreporter*.

Paul Slattery, then deputy assessor in Milford, agreed to coordinate the CAAO Data Line column. Instead of using the Office of Policy and Management sales ratio form; Paul went directly to the assessor. He devised a data form, shown at the end of this article. Also, instead of waiting for assessors to send sales for the column, the Commercial Record[5] was scanned each week for sales of $1,000,000 or more. When a sale came up that met the criteria, a data form was sent to the assessor of that town. The returns from assessors were excellent, indicating this was what they wanted.

The benefit of going directly to the assessor for the information provided greater detail of the sale. The State Sales Ratio forms did not have the complete breakdown of the property and the extra comments from the assessors. Once the program was launched, the Data Line column had two pages of sales in every issue of the *Assessoreporter*. Another plus for the column was the added membership from some independent appraisers that join CAAO as associates, just to collect the sales information.

[5] The *Commercial Record* is a publication that covers Connecticut real estate, banking and financial industries, including real estate transitions. In the early 1990s it was a weekly hard copy publication. It is now in a digital format.

It might seem strange that data forms were sent to assessors by way of the United State Postal Service. In the early 1990s there were not that many assessors' offices that had email. For an interesting article on the availability of emails in Connecticut assessors' offices, take a look at Volume #5, page 26 on the *History of Connecticut Assessors.* The article gives a brief review of when email came into use by Connecticut assessors. Shown below are three examples of sales that were in the monthly column.

Sample Sales

Avon: Apartment complex, located at Avon Wood Road, sold for $6,900,000 on 10/21/92. The property at one time was a declared condominium and has since been declassified. The three story frame and brick apartments were built in 1973 and are located on 47.5 acres. The 163 units sold for $42,331 per unit.

Newington: Retail distribution center located at 3127 Berlin Turnpike, was a former Grossman's Lumber store, sold 10/13/92 for $1,560,000. The building was built in 1962, is 14 feet high, Butler type construction, and containing 41,000 sq. ft. of building area. It is located on a 4.131-acre parcel with 350 feet of street frontage. The property sold for $38.05 sq. ft.

Wethersfield: Commercial shopping center, located at 1380 Berlin Turnpike sold 1/7/92 for $15,200,000. It is constructed of masonry bearing walls, with 18 feet of height. It was built in various stages starting in 1968 when 40% was built. In 1990 33% was built and in 1991 27% was built. The center contains 186,169 sq. ft. and is located on a 21.25-acre parcel of land. The selling price was $81.65 per sq. ft.

Paul continued with the CAAO Data Line column until the November 1998 issue of the *Assessoreporter*. Betsy Quist, then the assessor of Woodbridge, took over the program with the January 1999 issue of the *Assessoreporter.*

Betsy continued as the coordinator of the Data Line column through July 2004 *Assessoreporter*. There were a number of factors that phased out the program. One of the factors was the amount of million dollar sales in each issue of the Commercial Record. It was time consuming to research each sale. Another issue was the lack of response from assessors in sending in the sales. Last but not least was the availability of assessors to gain access to the Warren Group, f.k.a the Commercial Record online database to research sales themselves.

Even if you didn't need the sales information for a tax appeal, the benefit of having the data available was a plus. It's not that often that your community has a sale of a special purpose property. Examples include: Shopping centers, motels, office buildings, fast food properties, large industrial building, and large tracts of land. During your revaluation, having the data available at your fingertips portray you as a professional assessor who is informed about the current real estate market.

Continued next page

Sample of Data Line Request Form

CAAO DATA LINE

TO: Connecticut Assessors

FROM:

In an effort to help CAAO members be better informed about the current real estate market, we are asking your help in supplying recent sales of unique type properties. In each issue of the *Assessoreporter*, the most recent sales will be summarized for your review. If your town / city has had any recent sales on the following type properties, please send them along.

COMMERCIAL		**INDUSTRIAL**	**MISCELLANEOUS**
Shopping Centers	- Medical Bldgs.	Newer 1 story	Apartment (20+ units)
Office Buildings	- Restaurants	Multy. story	Golf Courses
Hotels – Motels	- Strip Centers	Mill type	Health Care Bldgs.
Fast Food	- Auto Dealers	Large Ind. Bldg.	Farm Sales
Bowling Alley	- Theater	Warehouses	Large Land Tracts

SALES DATA

TOWN: _____ PROPERTY TYPE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

SELLING PRICE: _____ DATE OF SALE: _____

STORY HEIGHT:_____AGE: _____LAND AREA: _____

GROSS BLDG. AREA: _____CONSTRUCTION: _____

NUMBER OF UNITS: _____

MISC. INFORMATION:

SEND TO

Accessing DMV Motor Vehicle Records

Assessing a motor vehicle is a huge undertaking for any assessor's office. Keeping track of the buying, selling, transferring, dispositions of vehicles, stolen vehicles or people moving in and out of town is by no means an easy task. Compiling the annual motor vehicle grand list requires countless hours, numerous procedural checks, and the valuation of the unpriced motor vehicles. To top it off, assessors have an added burden with the enactment of the supplemental motor vehicle list that started with the 1976 grand list.

The Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles supplies the bulk of the information. The information includes the make, model, year, vehicle VIN number, owner and address. The assessors have the task of pricing those vehicles that were sent to them unpriced. Another task is the applying the various veteran exemptions and disability exemptions to the vehicle for those that qualify.

Prior to 2010, the taxpayers were mostly on their own as far as gathering proof for the various situations mentioned above. Effective July 1, 2010, assessors had the ability to access the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) mainframe to assist taxpayers with these tasks. Each office had a security key with constantly changing numbers that was needed to type into the DMV software to access the DMV data. In 2015, DMV converted from the mainframe to their new Connecticut Integrated Vehicle and Licensing System (CIVLS) system. Assessors started accessing vehicle data via the current DMV Portal with the conversion. Upon submission of application to DMV to access the DMV Portal, assessment office personnel are supplied a username and password by DMV. DMV has the ability to track every vehicle that is researched to ensure the research meets the terms of our agreement with DMV.

Hot Line Notice to Subscribers

The contract for the Department of Motor Vehicles Portal access by assessors runs from July 1st to June 30th each year. For existing towns that have already signed up for DMV Direct, Department of Motor Vehicles will mail out the annual invoice in March. Department of Motor Vehicles' current access fee, for the year 2022, is $250.00 for towns with a population of 38,000 or under and $450.00 for towns with a population over 38,000.

For those towns that do not currently subscribe to have Department of Motor Vehicle access and would like to sign up, they should contact the CAAO Motor Vehicle Committee.

Connecticut Candidates Club

The Connecticut Candidates Club is an organization that was formed to assist Connecticut Assessors who desire to obtain assessment and appraisal designations, especially through the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO). It is basically a self-help group that will consult, assist, review and advise on all levels of assessment education. The area of greatest assistance is at the level of demonstration appraisals.

A formal announcement of the formation of the Candidates Club was mailed out in August 1989 to all those persons that had signed up with interest. At the June 1989 UConn Assessors School there were 72 people who expressed interest in the formation of the Candidates Club. The announcement outlined the purpose, scope and responsibilities of the club. CAAO 1989 President John Dagata was informed by IAAO Director of Professional Services, Dean McQuown, that the concept of the Candidates Clubs worked, and had been very helpful in getting members in designation tracks. Mr. McQuown advised Mr. Dagata that he recommended Gordon Donley CAE[6] to the IAAO position of Professional Designation Advisor for the State of Connecticut to help with the organization and promotion of the Candidates Club. Another driving force behind the organization of the Connecticut Candidates Club was Hartford Deputy Assessor Alexander Standish CAE[7], and chairman of the Professional Designation Committee.

In a letter dated, September 24, 1990, to CAAO President Charles Agli, Gordon Donley, CAE announced that a steering committee was established on September 18, 1990 in which it elected the following slate of officers. Chairman: Walter Lawrence of Tolland; Vice Chairman Mark DeVestern of Newtown; Secretary Donna Brodowski of East Hampton; and Treasurer Vivian Bachteler of Rocky Hill. Those in attendance at the steering committee meeting on September 18, 1990 included the following assessors: Dennis Hlavac, of Wallingford, Ken Raby Wallingford, Mark DeVestern Newtown, Gordon Donley New Canaan, Vivian Bachteler Rocky Hill, Walter Lawrence Tolland, Donna Brodowski East Hampton, Herbert Braasch Southington, and Fred Chmura of the Office of Policy and Management.

In promoting the need for further education, Mr. Donley made an evaluation of the education experience level of Connecticut Assessors that revealed the following.

1. Most assessors had taken all required courses offered by the CAAO Committee at the Connecticut Assessor's School.
2. Most assessors had taken the CCMA exam, and received their CCMA Designation.
3. Most assessors had taken additional assessing and appraising courses offered by other organizations.
4. Very few assessors have taken all required courses to obtain a professional designation other than the state CCMA designation.

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[6] Gordon Donley (CAE) New Canaan assessor received his Certified Assessment Evaluation designation at the 1978 IAAO conference held in Toronto

[7] Alexander Standish (CAE) Hartford deputy assessor received his Certified Assessment Evaluation designation on October 20, 1963

Mr. Donley went on to say that the prime directive of the Connecticut Candidates Club is to encourage and assist all assessors to expand their assessing and appraising education. It is also to encourage and assist those who seek other assessor and appraiser designations. Mr. Donley stated, "If you want to expand your assessment education and if you want to work towards earning additional designations, the Connecticut Candidates Club is the group to join."

The first course that the Candidates Club sponsored was IAAO Course #1 Fundamentals of Real Estate Property Appraisal. The instructor was Joan Paskewich. The course was held once a week from September 5th to October 12, 1991 in Rocky Hill. The first IAAO course at UConn was in 1992 with IAAO Course 301 Mass Appraisal of Residential Property with John McDermott as the instructor. Other IAAO Courses at UConn included IAAO Course 302 Mass Appraisal of Income Property in 1993 and IAAO Course Assessment Administration in 1994, with Dave MacArthur as instructor in both courses. Other courses at UConn included in 1999 IAAO Course Standards of Practice and Professional Ethics and in 2000 IAAO Course Assessment Administration. Over the next several years other IAAO courses were offered in Rocky Hill and Madison in the evening and spread over several weeks. Instructors included John Ryan and Pat Hedwall. Two of the first to successfully obtain an IAAO professional designation through this program were Pat Hedwall and Fred Chmura.

When the Candidates Club first offered IAAO courses at the UConn Assessors School, they ran into some opposition from members of CAAO. The Candidates Club was getting pressure not to hold the courses. There were CAAO members who believed that the Assessors School eliminated IAAO courses back a number of years ago and there was no need to bring them back. There were other members of CAAO who were not happy with the courses offered at the Work Shop sessions and wanted an alterative. They believed that once they finished the basic courses, there was a need to brush up on their skills in an ever-changing world.

In the summer of 1996 due to the lack of interest and participation by members during the past year, the Connecticut Candidates Club voted to close its operations. Club members agreed that it was time for those interested in continuing the education program, a Connecticut Chapter of IAAO should be organized.

In September of 1996, it was announced by Joan Paskewich that IAAO had approved the Connecticut Chapter of IAAO. All files and funds were turned over to the newly formed chapter. The first meeting of the new Chapter of IAAO was on November 20, 1996. The following members were elected as officers. President Joan Paskewich; Vice President Joan Robinson; Secretary Eugenia Flynn; Treasurer Larry LaBarbera; Executive Board, 1 year term: Rande Chmura and Catherine Daboll; 2 year term: Michael Bekech and Donna Patchen.

One of the purposes of establishing the IAAO Chapter was to extend many of the benefits of IAAO membership to fellow assessors and assessment staff who could not afford all of the opportunities available from IAAO at this time. The Chapter gives permission to reproduce brochures and IAAO literature for distribution to its members. Additionally, it will continued to sponsorship IAAO courses and workshops at reduced rates and provide opportunities for networking and fellowship on an after hours basis.
(Photo next page)

Connecticut Chapter of I.A.A.O
Officers and committee members

Pictured above are officers and committee members of the Connecticut Chapter of IAAO. Front row: Larry LaBarbera, Vivian Bachteler, Row 2: Patricia Hedwall, Mike Bekech, Joan Robinson, Donna Price, Back row: Genie Flynn, Catherine Daboll, Joan Paskewich, David Gardner. (Picture from the March 1997 *Assessoreporter*)

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On March 19, 2003 the CAAO Executive Board accepted the new CAAO Logo. The logo is used on Association letterhead, the web site and other official documents. Three ideas were submitted, and this design was chosen for its simplicity, and adaptability to various uses. Brian Smith, then deputy assessor in East Hartford proposed the basic layout.

HB 5059 its history, it's implications, and related issues

Ed note: This overview of the history of HB5950 has been edited by the historical committee and is presented as a separate article from the interview of John Chaponis during his 2023 bio interview. It remains primarily in his words and as presented at that time.

I realized that I loved CT and returned in November of 1992 to accept the position of Assessor for the Town of Colchester. Coming from being an Assessor in NJ to CT, I was shocked to learn that many of these positions in CT had a "term of office" pursuant to CGS 9-198. This seriously disturbed me because only the assessor is empowered to make assessment decisions, but if an assessor needs to be reappointed by an elected official, then that elected official (who may have a personal agenda or constituency) has a carrot to dangle before the assessor saying "do X,Y & Z or I will not be reappointing you in November".

In NJ, Assessors have tenure just like a schoolteacher. The way it works is once you work four years plus one additional day for a municipality, you have tenure. So, the municipality has four years to figure out if they want to keep you. After that, you have tenure and cannot be fired except for just cause. This eliminates any political interference in the assessment process.

Tony Homicki was CAAO president in 1993 and put me on the Legislative Committee thinking it might be nice to hear how NJ did things in comparison to CT. Of course, I jumped on this opportunity to begin talking about the fact that we have no job security.

During this same time, I started an "Administrators Union" in Colchester, and we put our Assessor, Town Engineer, Finance Director, Social Services Director, Park & Recreation Director, Librarian, Senior Center Director, and Youth Services Director all into a union that stated that no one could be disciplined unless the employer had "just cause". "Just cause" are not merely two words, but rather are short for "the seven tests for just cause" which are a very well-defined test created in 1964 by then arbitrator Carroll Daugherty. While this personally gave me the job security that I felt I needed to be able perform the fair administration of the local property tax "without fear of repercussion", I still wanted to fix the problem here in CT. I was hearing stories about colleagues of mine being told to "lower all these assessments on my biggest campaign contributors by 20% or you are fired". Over time, it turned into an obsession that I couldn't seem to let go of.

When I became CAAO President in 2001, it was my goal to see something get done. I pushed our Legislative Committee Chairs to make this their number one priority in 2001, but we couldn't seem to get anything going at the Capitol.

From 2006 – 2008, we saw 5 or 6 Connecticut Assessors get fired under the guise of "we are choosing not to reappoint you". The stories some of these Assessors told were disgusting: "Change the assessment for my brother-in-law or you are out of a job." When the assessor refused, they were not reappointed. Again, I kept making more noise at Legislative Committee and Executive Board meetings and some felt this was something we could never be successful with. So, in 2008, I went to my own personal state representative and had a bill raised. While it didn't go far, it was a start.

In 2009, I asked the CAAO Executive Board to increase our "legislative monitoring" contract to a "lobbying" contract so that a professional firm could assist in lobbying on our behalf. The Executive Board agreed and put some funding behind our effort. However, in 2009, we did not even get a bill raised.

That brings us to 2010. The Legislative Committee Chair at the time felt this was a lost cause (and as you will see later, maybe he was right). My stubbornness was at an all-time high, so I asked the Executive Board if the Legislative Committee didn't want to take this on anymore, would the Executive Board vote to allow me to represent CAAO on just this one issue (rather than getting a bill raised as just an individual). Figuring there was nothing to lose, the Executive Board agreed and voted to allow me to take on this charge. 2010 CAAO President David Dietsch pulled me aside after the meeting and offered to come along on any/all meetings and wanted to help in any way possible.

A friendship was born. Dave Dietsch a.k.a. "Tito" has become one of my very good friends, but it all began back in 2010. Dave and I went back to my state representative and brought back my old bill as HB 5059, An Act Concerning the Appointment of Municipal Assessors (2/8/2010). This bill repealed CGS 9-198 (terms of office for assessors) and removed the ability to "elect" Assessors. It also removed "Assessors" from 9-185 (municipal officers) who had a "term of office" pursuant to 9-187.

Dave and I then began our "tour" as we made our way around to every person we could talk to. This bill was raised in the "Labor & Public Employees" committee, and we went and talked to every member that we could. We asked assessors who had a representative/senator on Labor to get us a meeting with them. There was a public hearing on 2/10/2010 and we paraded four assessors in to talk about political abuse including being pressured to change assessment by the elected officials who needed to reappoint them. David Dietsch's testified to his own arm twisting in Waterbury by a mayor who had just recently been sent to jail. These assessor's testimony left Labor committee members somewhat speechless and shocked as few questions were asked because I think they didn't want to hear the answers in public.

The bill passed the Labor committee unanimously (3/16/2010) and was referred to the House floor for a vote. However, a legislator then referred it back out to Planning and Development (sometimes this is done as a way to sidetrack or to kill something and it certainly gave us pause). Dave and I hit up everyone we could talk to on P&D and attended their vote and P&D voted the bill out unanimously and sent it back to the House floor (4/7/2010). Then a legislator referred it back out again this time to the Government Administration & Elections Committee (4/9/2010), and we were feeling like people were smiling at us but not really behind us. We went to meet with as many GAE members who would agree to see us and had an adversarial meeting with then House GAE Chairman Rep. Gayle Slossberg who vehemently opposed it.

Deadlines were fast approaching at the Capitol and Randy Collins, CAAO's Lobbyist, found out that GAE would vote on all their final remaining bills during a break on the steps outside the House floor. Dave and I left our offices, drove down there, and stood right next to them while they conducted their meeting (this is interesting because those House steps are roped off today and the public could never get near them today).

When someone brought HB 5059, GAE member Rep. John Hetherington said, "move to consent calendar" and got a second. (Consent calendars are where they put a block of bills and vote them all at once instead of voting on them individually). I was initially shocked as we knew the Chairman opposed this bill. Dave was equally ecstatic because no one would likely vote no to a consent calendar as they likely wanted the rest of the 10-15 bills to move forward. HB 5059 got voted out of GAE unanimously, on that consent calendar (4/14/2010) and for the 3rd time, sent back to the House Floor.

While it was referred back to the House floor for the third time, getting it called for a vote would be a challenge as well. Two people were key in making this happen. The first was Jim Vigue, a lobbyist with Municipal Employees Union Independent (my union in Colchester) and State Rep. Joe Aresimowicz (also known as Joe A-Z), a former Union President for AFSCME, and a legislator on the rise at the time who went on to become Majority leader in 2013 and Speaker of the House in 2017. I knew Jim Vigue and Dave knew A-Z as he was the Berlin State Rep. where Dave Dietsch lived. We got to speak with A-Z and Jim kept reminding Joe about the bill. Jim Vigue tells a story how one day he walked into A-Z's office and said "can we get that assessor bill going today" and A-Z says "how many assessors you got Jim" to which Jim Vigue replies "I got one; but he's a real pain in the ass". That wasn't true as Jim had several assessors who were members of MEUI but it's a testament to Jim and A-Z's friendship/relationship.

It gets called for a vote HB 5059 passed the House Floor unanimously on 4/21/2010. We were pretty much at the Capitol every day for the next three weeks trying to get it called for a vote in the Senate and it finally happened and it passed the Senate on 5/4/2010, and was signed by the Governor on 5/26/2010.

Interestedly enough, few bills have to clear three committees before making it to the floor and HB 5059 was voted out of all three, the House, the Senate, and never saw one single "no" vote. While no one seemed to want to be on the record as having voted no to a "good government bill" that would ensure "local taxation could be fairly applied without fear of repercussions", we still didn't feel like we were completely supported but rather they had to do it.

Now comes the sad part I referenced earlier:

I stated at the beginning that the Legislative Chairs felt this was a lost cause and while Dave and I pursued it and felt like we made headway by eliminating the "term of office" and "terminations without cause", it was didn't last very long.

Seven years later, in PA 17-2, in the dreaded "budget implementer", buried in Section 82 (out of 732 sections) someone slipped in the words:
"Notwithstanding the provisions of any special act,
Municipal charter or ordinance"

Which basically says "local charter or ordinance," now rule again. In other words, if the local ordinance or charter says you "have a term of office", it was now back to being allowable. Some towns were lucky in that they went through Charter revision after 2010 and before 2017 and they showed the town leaders the law change and those towns removed "terms of office" from their

Charter. Colchester and Branford are two that I am aware of who revised their Charters to remove a "term" of office and need for a reappointment.

The 2017 legislative change in the implementer, that was never a raised bill, never had a public hearing, and was never discussed in public. But it didn't take long before someone took advantage of it and in 2020 the Town of Newton chose "not to reappoint" their Assessor. They offered the Assessor a demotion to Assistant Assessor, but the Assessor refused and chose to move on from the town of Newtown and is currently employed as the Assessor in another Connecticut town.

If the role of the Assessor is the fair administration of the local property tax yet we become subject to termination without cause that certainly allows an elected official power to apply pressure on the Assessor's determinations.

One positive still remaining in place is that Assessors must be certified. While I view this as a huge positive, I also see this as being in jeopardy. Towns like Newtown who fired their Assessor under the guise of "not being re-appointed" found out that no State Certified Assessor wanted their job after they discarded their pervious Assessor in that manner. It took Newtown almost two years to fill their vacancy and some legislators viewed "long vacancies" as a sign that is a lack of Certified Assessors available.

Serving as the CAAO Legislative Chair for the prior ten years, I developed relationships where I receive phone calls, or emails, from certain law makers saying "we are hearing that there are not enough certified Assessors in CT to fill the vacancies". They question if the requirement for Assessor to be certified should remain in place? The truth was that the municipalities struggling to fill their posts were either; not offering a competitive salary; or were viewed an employer whom had not treated the prior staff fairly.

If Assessors are not required to be certified, it allows a newly elected mayor to be able to give the job to anyone they like and allows a politician the ability to control that office; especially coupled with a "term of office" and need for a "reappointment". I feel Connecticut is at a very dangerous point right now as that would water down a fair administration of the local property tax.

Assessors need to be able to act freely and independently of any oversight on "valuation and exemption issues". The law empowers only the assessor to make these determinations and specifically states that only the board of assessment appeals or superior court can override an assessment determination. However, if you allow an elected politician to appoint absolutely anyone, coupled with the ability to remove them easily, I believe fair taxation on the local level would be in jeopardy.

As I get closer to retirement, it is time for someone else to pick up this torch and keep this battle alive.

What Revaluation Companies Did Assessors Work For

In Volume #3 of the *History of Connecticut Assessors*, there was an article listing what revaluation company these Connecticut assessors worked for prior to becoming an assessor. The article listed 96 assessors that worked for 15 different revaluation companies. Volume #3 was published in June 2014; it does not show revaluation companies currently doing work in Connecticut.

The top nine revaluation companies where Connecticut assessors worked, prior to June 2014

Revaluation Company	**Assessors Employed**
United Appraisal	22
Cole-Layer-Trumble	15
Lesher-Glendinning	11
Sabre Systems	9
J.M. Cleminshaw	8
Valuation Associates (See article below)	7
MMC / Vision	7
KVS Info. Systems	4
George Horan Co.	3

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Assessors That Got Their Start With Valuation Associates

William Connelly was the assessor of Bridgeport from 1925 to 1948, CAAO President from 1937 to 1939 and IAAO President in 1939. He was also the owner of the revaluation firm Valuation Associates. Valuation Associates conducted a number of revaluations in Connecticut from the late 1920s to the 1970s. Some well-known assessors first got their start in the revaluation field with the company. Of the seven former employees, five were CAAO presidents, and two were IAAO presidents. They include former assessors: Robert Coyne, assessor of Milford and Danbury and CAAO president 1985; Joseph Cullen assessor of Darien and CAAO president 1976; Robert Kemp, assessor of Wallingford and Cromwell and CAAO president 1963; Leo McBride assessor of Bridgeport; Herbert Shay assessor of Fairfield, CAAO president 1941 to 1946 and IAAO president 1956 to 1957 and Joseph Breault assistant assessor of Manchester. A distinguish group of assessors to say the least.

Companies That Did The First Revaluations with Property Records Cards

This report takes a look at when Connecticut municipalities completed their first revaluation with property record cards. The report lists the name of the revaluation company and the years of the revaluation by that company. The information was gathered from the CAAO publication *Abstract of the Single Assessors in Connecticut.* Of the 169 towns in Connecticut, 114 of them furnished the information. There were some towns that furnished the year of their revaluation with property record cards, but not the name of the company. Those towns are not in this report.

Some interesting facts include the following.

- During the 1950s and 1960s the revaluation cycle was every10-years.
- Of the 114 towns that reported, four companies did 53 percent of the revaluations.
- Most towns started with property record cards in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Peter Marsele of Marsele Appraisal Co. was the assessor of Bloomfield from 1952 to 2005.
- Robert Kemp of Kemp & Associates was the assessor of Wallingford from 1964 to 1982.
- Sherwood Vermilya was President of United Appraisal. He was the assessor of Westbrook in 1982 and East Hampton from 1962 to 1985.
- A number of these revaluation companies are no longer in business in Connecticut.
- The first reported town to do a revaluation with property record cards was Bridgeport in 1927.
- William Connelly, former Bridgeport assessor, was the owner of Valuation Associates.
- The same year is shown when the company did multiple revaluations in different towns.

Company name and year of revaluations with property record cards
Each date represents a revalued town

Appraisal Consultant of Connecticut: (6) 1959, 1959, 1959, 1968, 1970 and 1982.

Associated Surveys: (1) 1971

J. M. Cleminshaw Company: (15) 1935, 1951, 1953, 1953, 1955, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1957, 1964, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1969, and 1971.

Cole-Layer-Trumble Company: (12) 1950, 1953, 1952, 1958, 1960s, 1961, 1962, 1965, 1970, 1970±, 1972, and 1984

Lauren Elliott & Associates: (1) 1999

General Appraisal Company: (1) 1970

George B. Horan Company: (4) 1944, 1955, 1959, and 1958

In-House revaluations: (6) Bridgeport 1927, Wethersfield 1954, Manchester 1956, Lebanon 1959, Washington 1969, and Warren 1976.

P.R.C. Jacobs: (1) 1963
Continued next page

Kemp & Associates: (**1)** 1969

KVS: (2) 1951 and 1991

Lesher-Glendinning: (7) 1959, 1972, 1986, 1992, 1993, 1994, and 2000.

Peter Marsele: (12) 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1962, 1969, and 1970.

MMC: (1) 1980 Note: Forerunner of Vision Appraisal

Municipal Consultants & Appraisers: (1) 1961

Municipal Services: (2) 1935± and 1950.

North American Appraisal Company: (1) 1970

Sabre Systems: (2) 1988 and 1993

SLF Appraisal Inc: (5) 1978, 1980s, 1989, 1989 and 1990.

L. E. Thomas Company: (2) 1958 and 1959.

United Appraisal Company: (21) 1949, 1951, 1954, 1955, 1960, 1960, 1961, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1964, 1964, 1967, 1967, 1970, 1970, 1976, 1978, 1979 and 1979.

Valuation Associates: (6) 1950, 1952, 1954, 1954, 1967, and 1978.

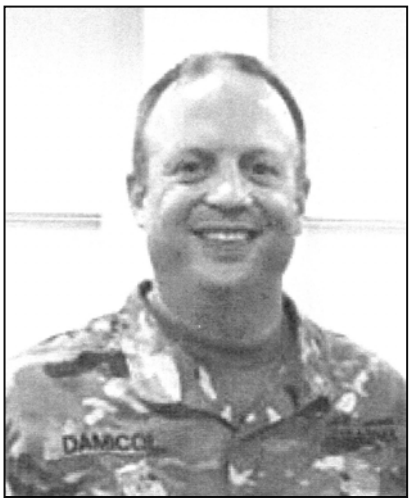
Vision Appraisal: (2) 2000 and 2001.

Wenzlic Company: (1) 1953

E.T. Wilkins Associates: (1) 1960

*Side Bar: Volume #2, page 43 on the History of Connecticut Assessors has a picture of the typical 1950s-1960s property record card and a summary of its use. Go to CAAO Web Site and the **Search** screen for Research/Historian Committee.*

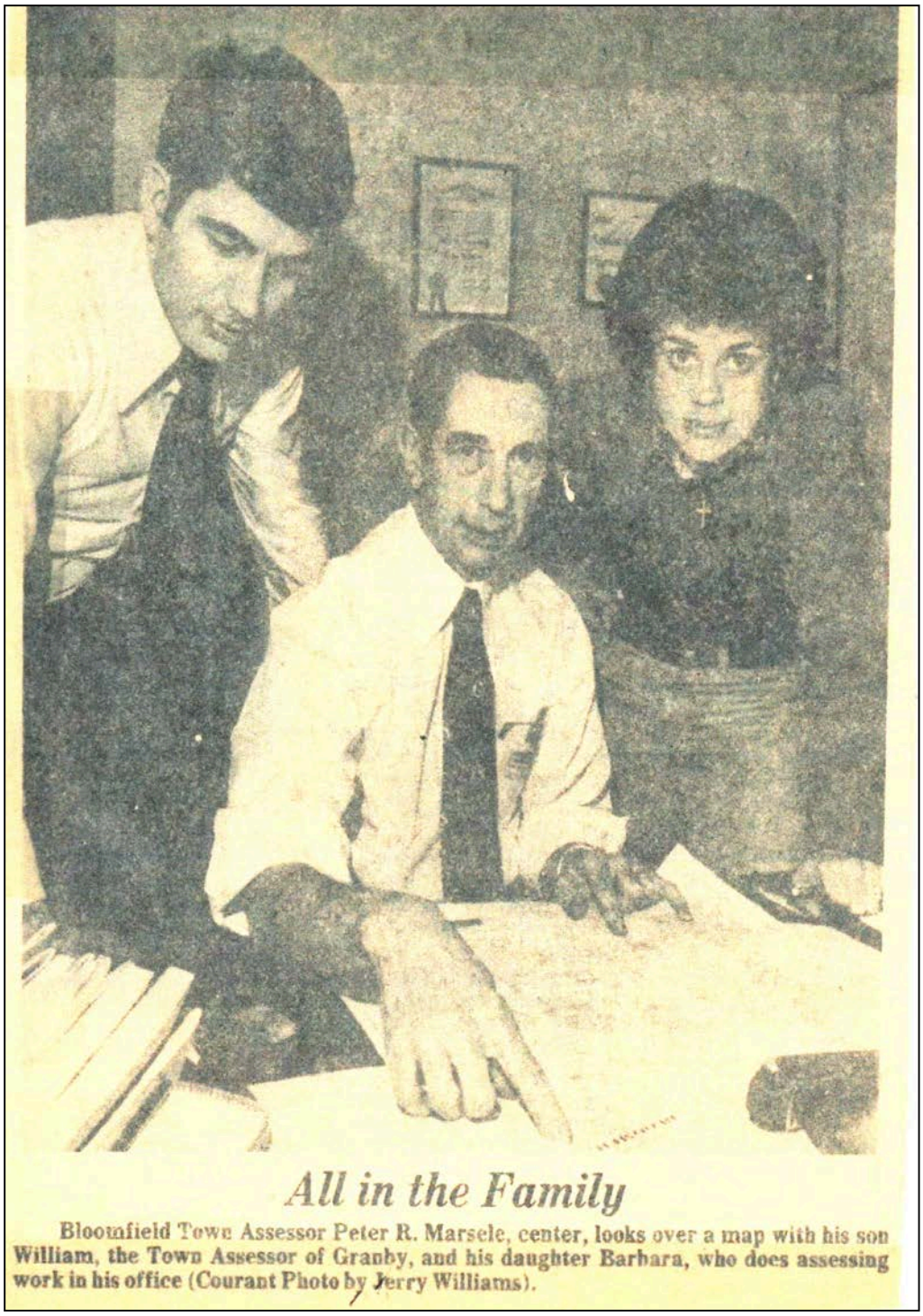
A Tribute to Michael J. D'Amicol



Former Coventry Assessor, Michael J. D'Amicol passed away on January 1, 2024. He was the son of former Chester and Westbrook Assessor, Patricia Stevenson. Mike began working in the assessment field working on revaluations with Lesher Glendenning. Bob Kemp, then the assessor of Cromwell, recommended Mike to Charlie Agli for an opening in the New Britain assessor's office. Charlie hired Mike for Mike's first position in an assessor's office. Charlie said, "Mike was a hard worker and quick learner. It was obvious that he would be an assessor in some town in not too many years." Mike went from New Britain to Glastonbury in 2003 where he served as the assistant assessor for Dave Valente for a few years. He served as Coventry Assessor from 2008 to 2022. Mike was also the assessor of Bolton 2008 to 2012. Mike served in the National Guard for more than two decades. During his employment with Coventry, he was deployed twice to one-year overseas deployment in 2012 and 2015 and also a one-year deployment in 2006 while in Glastonbury. Mike was 50 years old at the time of his passing. The February 2024 *Assessoreporter*, page 16 has a write up on Michael's career.

Town of Coventry – Managers Office: At last night's Town Council meeting (May 3, 2016), Town Assessor Michael D'Amicol, who has served with the National Guard for 22 years and been deployed twice during his 9-year tenure with the Town, thanked the Town for their support during his military service. He recently returned from a year-long deployment at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. While there he arranged to have the American flag flown over the base in honor of Coventry. He presented the flag to the town, which will be displayed at Town Hall. Shown L to R: Beth Bauer, Town Finance Director, Michael D'Amicol, and the Town Manager John Elsesser.

Marsele Family – Hartford Courant April 11, 1978



All in the Family

Bloomfield Town Assessor Peter R. Marsele, center, looks over a map with his son William, the Town Assessor of Granby, and his daughter Barbara, who does assessing work in his office (Courant Photo by Jerry Williams).

Continued next page

Marsele Family - Hartford Courant April 11, 1978

Like Father, Like Son - Like Daughter, Too

By KARLYNN CARRINGTON

BLOOMFIELD — To have one child go into his father's profession is not an unusual occurrence. To have both children do it, though, is less common. And when the profession is assessing, it becomes even rarer.

Peter R. Marsele has been Bloomfield's town assessor for 26 years. He is the former chairman of the Hartford Area Assessor's Association, a group that he organized and headed for almost 25 years.

He is also the father of William D. Marsele, 28, the town assessor and assistant town manager in Granby, and of Barbara A. "Bobby" Marsele, 25, who does assessing work for her father, who pays her salary. While William is more interested in straight assessing work, which is the mass valuation of property, Bobby is interested in appraisal work, which is giving a detailed valuation of a single property.

The elder Marsele said that he did not force either child into the field.

Marsele said that when each child graduated from grammar school, he indicated that when the time came that they wanted to try assessing or appraisal work, simply come and ask him.

"I did not feel as a parent I had the right to force it on them. They had to make their own way in life," he said. He just gave them the opportunity, the exposure to see if they liked it.

William first started working for his father during a summer while he was in high school. He said that his first reaction to the work was that it was boring. But when he went away to a military college and started doing a lot of manual labor, the administrative work seemed better.

Later, William started doing more field work, servicing municipalities such as Ashford, Mansfield, Granby and East Granby. He worked for his father full-time after college and later became the assessor in Granby.

Bobby also worked for her father for part of her summer vacations and on school breaks, but Marsele said that it was much more sporadic than William's experience. Bobby said that her main interest was tennis.

She left college to become a tennis player and instructor, but in February 1975, a car accident injured her shoulder and ended her tennis career. Later that year, she began working full-time for her father.

The younger Marseles said that their father is a "bug on detail" but added that made it easier for them to learn and has helped them later on.

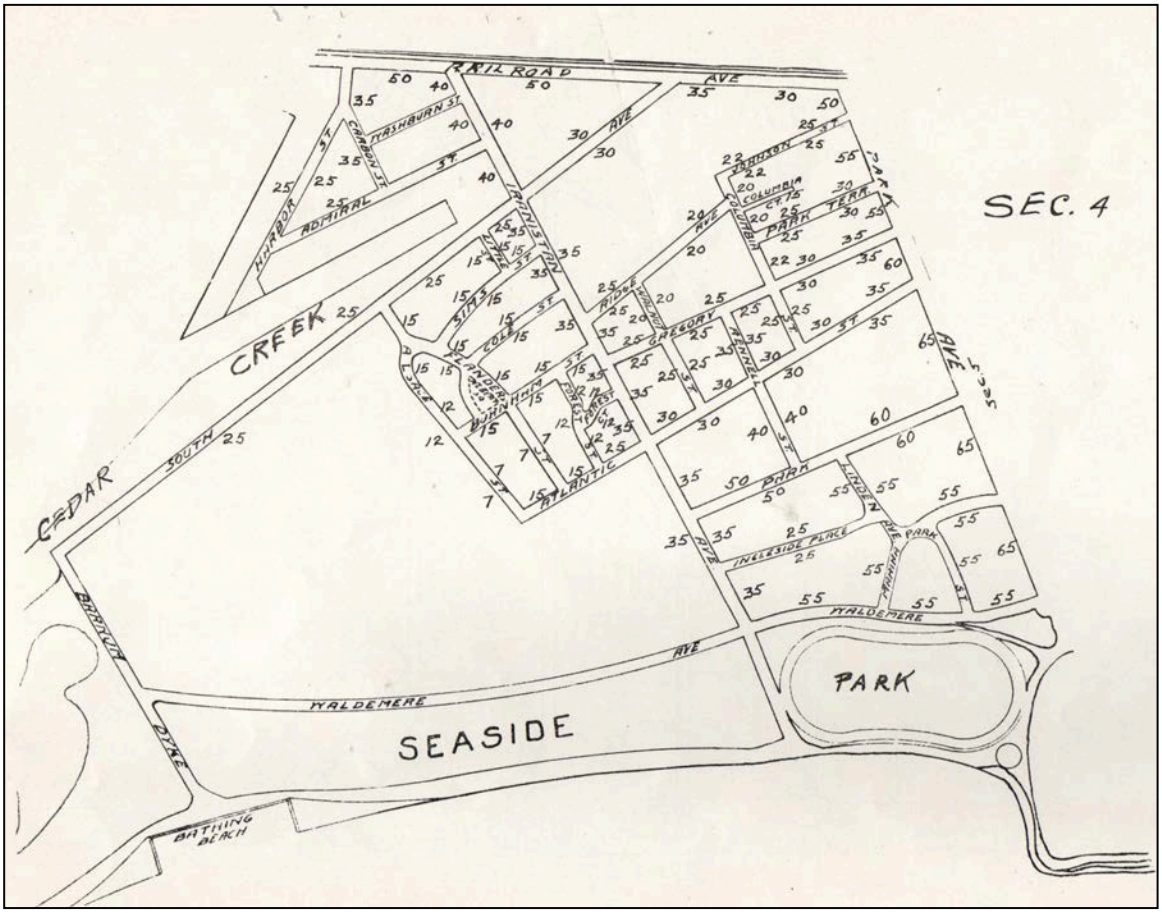
Marsele said he is extremely pleased to be able to spend the time necessary to train them, and that it is the fulfillment of his and his wife's dream. He said that he and his wife were firm believers in discipline and taught their children to respect and take advice from their elders, something he said is lacking today.

William said that the most valuable thing that his father has taught him in his work is to be prepared in the cases he handled. He said he overprepared. Bobby noted that the most minute detail can turn a court case around.

She also said that the rules her father taught her about being accurate and all-consuming in how she does her work will prepare her for life, whether she stays in assessing work or goes into another field.

"We just happen to be lucky," she said, "that the person who pays attention to us is our dad."

Valuation of Real Estate in Bridgeport Connecticut
By William F. Connelly
Tax Assessor
1933



The above map is one of 24 maps displaying the front foot land values in the various sections of Bridgeport. William F. Connelly, the assessor of Bridgeport from 1925 to 1948 presented his plan for the valuation of Bridgeport in a 39-page document entitled, *Valuation of Real Estate Bridgeport, Connecticut.*

Highlights of Mr. Connelly's document

Foreword

It is equitable and in tune with the spirit of the law that the tax burden of a municipality should be shared proportionately by all taxpayers alike, a uniform rule for ascertaining value for assessment purposes should be used. The use, therefore, of a "yard stick" of value is essential to distribute property taxes proportionately. The development of this common measure and its application to all properties is accomplished to the greatest degree thru a scientific system of assessment.

Unquestionably, even with modern assessment methods, imperfections are bound to exist due to the nature of the problem. Yet it will have to be admitted by those conversant with assessment

procedure thruout the United States that a modern system is infinitely better than the old methods of more or less blind estimate still largely prevalent thruout the entire country. Certainly, serious injustices will soon be brought to light and can be readily adjusted. If values and methods are open and explainable, confidence in the integrity of assessment office and its work should be engendered. To that end this publication is issued.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the great assistance in establishing basic land values given by the Bridgeport Real Estate Board and others with knowledge of real estate values. Valuable aid in the matter of building cost was contributed by the contractors and builders of this city. To these men the City of Bridgeport is deeply indebted.

William F. Connelly

General Scope

To secure any substantial measure of tax equalization, the principle of uniformity must be carefully observed. Uniformity can only be attained by the application of standardized methods and rules for determining assessment values. Valuation of a mass or property for assessment should be distinguished from appraisal of individual properties for other purposes where the question of relationship of one property to the other does not arise. Relative values in assessment are of the utmost importance. It is recognized that all factors entering into the valuation of all property cannot be reduced to precise rules of tables; human judgment cannot be and, as a matter of fact, should not be entirely eliminated.

The fact, however, that certain cases present themselves which defy the reasonable application of rules, should not prevent standardization where possible and practicable. The percentage of the unusual cases which can not be properly standardized is usually so small as to be negligible. Methods of valuation, standardized as far as possible, are a guarantee of fair assessments to taxpayers. In the following pages there are presented basic values and standardized rules used in calculating land and building assessments in the Tax Assessor's office. First land will be discussed and subsequently, buildings.

Unit Front-Foot Values

The basic factor in equalized urban land values is the front-foot value, the value per foot of land of an average inside lot with frontage on a street and a depth of one hundred feet. One hundred feet is usually taken thruout the country as the normal or standard depth for a parcel of urban land. To get the proper relative value it is essential to compare units which are identical in size, hence the necessity of using the front foot as a basis. In some states the unit of value is the square foot. Of course, this is simply another way of applying the same principle and is no wise in conflict with the front foot unit in use thruout Connecticut.

The next 24 pages of the publication had maps, similar to the one shown at the beginning of this article, listing the unit front foot values for various neighborhoods of Bridgeport.

On the maps which follow there are shown sections of the City of Bridgeport. The figures on each block indicate the assessed value per standard front foot of the land in that locality. In some instances, either side of the street within a block may take a different value; or again, values from one corner to another on the same side may require grading. Additions and allowance for corner

enhancement, depth, ledges, swamp, etc.; are given consideration thru the use of rules explained later.

Depth Tables and Application

It has been previously explained that the unit land values set forth on the foregoing section maps are based upon land depth of 100 feet as a standard. Where a lot is shorter than 100 feet a certain percentage is deducted from the standard unit value to give it specific application to the given depth; conversely a certain percentage is added when a lot is longer than the standard.

It should be noted that the percentage added and deducted is not directly proportional to lot depth. A lot 200 feet deep, for instance, is not valued at twice the amount of a lot 100 feet deep; nor is a lot 50 feet deep worth only one-half the amount of a lot 100 feet deep. Statistics have been developed which are used as the basis for depth adjustment. The percentage under 100 feet differs to a slight degree between residential and business property, but this difference vanishes in depths exceeding 100 feet.

The need for a reasonable adjustment factor in valuation of lots of varying depths is clear. In assessment work the use of standard percentages of increase or decrease is essential to equity; it assures uniformity of treatment to taxpayers and eliminates possible discrimination.

In the following tables percentages are presented for depths to 700 feet. These percentages have been applied to all lots in this city. The Bridgeport table is in substantial conformity with recognized standard depth tables in use in cities and towns thruout the United States which are credited with having scientific assessment methods; it unquestionably is conservative for general assessment purposes.

Preceding this section were examples, with computation, of various depths and unit values using depth tables that were included in the publication. Also included in this section are the rules and tables on how to handle corner and irregular lots in the City of Bridgeport.

Industrial and Harbor Parcels

Due to the nature of industrial plots special computations are desirable. The value of the land fronting on the street is given the usual front-foot price; interior land, however, is valued on a square foot price determined by the unit value of the contiguous street or streets.

Waterfront property has been assigned a relative waterline value generally dependent upon availability of deep water, its depth, its accessibility, etc. In addition to this, value is added for upland fronting on a street and under water area to the United States harbor line.

Other Considerations

While it is impractical for assessment purposes to consider minor or doubtful factors yet one must recognize extensive high, low, rocky or swampy conditions of unimproved land which interfere seriously with its use and make certain allowances in assessment. Private ways and alleys, rail and water facilities, zoning ordinances, etc, should be given consideration. In cases where a certain allowance factor affects all or most of the parcels within a block its influence may be given weight in the front foot value of the entire frontage.

Valuation of Buildings

To preserve the principle of uniformity as to method of ascertaining value, the basis applied to construction is the average cost of reproduction less depreciation and obsolescence. This basis is fair, determinable and practicable in its application for assessment purposes. It involves considerations of changing construction costs, age and condition of structures and loss in value due to other than physical causes. The prime figure for starting the calculation is cost of reproduction; this can be found quickly and with consistent accuracy; the allowances which must be made for physical and economic depreciation cannot be reduced to an inflexible rule. Sound judgment based upon knowledge and experience in weighting the various factors is essential so that the value of the structure will be equitable for tax purposes.

The application of the above principle involves the preparation of schedules of building costs for various types of construction. It is a matter of common knowledge that construction estimates vary, often considerably among contractors so average figures must be used as a basis. Cost schedules have been prepared and are in use in the Tax Assessor's office. All buildings alike in type and size are priced the same although the final resultant value may be different owing to differences in depreciation and obsolescence. These construction figures have been reduced for application in the field to price per square foot for the various classes of construction.

There is presented below condensed tables, which will indicate in general the methods of this office in valuing buildings. It will be noted that owing to differences in plumbing, heating and lighting, etc., such cost are not included in the basic building price---but for simplicity are added later. In establishing the value of a building, the structure is measured and inspected; it is classified and priced according to the standard schedule with plus and minus adjustments from the standard. Only classifiable buildings are grouped into classes; many large residences and all large commercial and industrial buildings must be treated individually. In such cases the method is to compute the cost of the individual construction components separately. These cost when added, of course, equal the total for the structure. The same basic prices for material and labor are used. Usually in such cases the working unit is the cubic foot rather than the square foot. The tables following are for construction, which permits of classification.

Tables are not included in this document.

Conclusion

It is realized, of course, that conditions affecting value of the property do not remain static; they change from year to year. Any system which fails to observe these factors will soon become obsolete and the effort extended in the past will be largely wasted. The Tax Assessor's office is watchful to discover inequalities resulting from changes and other causes and is appreciative of all co-operation to the end that assessments may be kept substantially proportionate and equitable.

Windsor Locks, October 3rd, 1979

By Charles P. Danna Jr.

Charles P. Danna Jr. is a member of the CAAO Research / Historian Committee and former assessor of South Windsor.

Most assessment administrators know that the public has no understanding of the glamorous and exciting lives lived by those of us in the assessment field. Take for example the exciting world of data collection and field reviewing of residential properties. Yes, most of us have experienced guard dogs, attack geese, and the occasional interfering nosey neighbor. This is just one such memorable adventure I experienced that occurred on October 3, 1979.

For me it started out as a typical day in the life of a newbie revaluation data collector. Early in the day after checking in with the Windsor Locks Assessor, and the CLT / United Appraisal revaluation office, I had stepped outside to a bright clear crisp early fall morning.

Earlier in the week I had planned my routes and had grabbed the necessary location and addresses information I needed to perform the required reviews, inspections, listings and measurements. Windsor Locks was in the middle of completing a townwide revaluation. I had had a successful week thus far, having completed a good number of field inspections. It was made more rewarding because I had completed not only the daily requirement of inspections, listing, and measuring, in this tightly developed little community, but I had also finished the revaluation company's scheduled and required "weekly quota." Today was shaping up to be a bonus week for me and the job's collection duties.

The section of town I was working in was a fully developed area of small ranch homes build on concrete slabs, located just east of Route 75 and adjacent to Bradley Airport and the Air Museum. These were homes that were built in the fifties, having three basic models, minimum accessories, some with carports, or garages and some without. Each was on a level postage stamp lot, in tight block subdivisions. It was my guess that the builder has only offered three paint colors and it was the unusual owner who had varied the original color choices over the years. Most yards were without fences, had minimal landscaping, and the trees in the yards were just reaching shading capability. I would have estimated this area was still a great neighborhood for starter homes. It was also a nice quite perfect situation for measuring the buildings and outbuildings. And while many homeowners were not home during the weekdays, the early evening and weekends proved perfect entry inspection opportunities and successes.

As the day progressed I was having a spectacular time completing the necessary tasks the revaluation inspections required, as well as, catching many homeowners for their signatures and providing explanation of the revaluation process to their concerned questions. While doing so, I couldn't help but be aware of how the sky was clouding over, appearing more and more as if a storm was brooding.

During my brief lunch break I turned on my car radio to check the weather, but did not have clear reception and couldn't get a clear forecast. Between 1pm and 2 pm, I was well on my way to a record data collection day while the sky gradually darkened, and on again and off again showers began appearing and the wind began to blow in short brief bursts. I did not have rain

gear with me, so I began thinking seriously of quitting early. About 2:45 pm it became clear to me that the sky was now black, the rain was starting to come down in wind swept sheets and regardless of the record setting collection rate I had been performing, it was time to call it a day. I packed up my equipment and paperwork, noted where I was and what would be my starting point for the next day's efforts, and started for home.

It was less than 15 minutes to travel from my location in Windsor Locks, cross the Connecticut River, and get to East Windsor. From there I would normally travel south towards South Windsor and on to my home. Just about the time I reached East Windsor an emergency broadcast announcement was blaring from the radio. A severe thunderstorm warning for the Windsor Locks area announced that all in the area should seek immediate shelter. I hesitated briefly, but decided to continue on my way. Twenty minutes later I reached home to find my wife had the television on and was watching early broadcasts noting the horror and damage caused by a surprise abnormal tornado touchdown in Windsor, Windsor Locks, and Suffield Connecticut.

The next morning I reported to CLT/United Appraisal to determine our next course of action. The project manager sent me out to aid in the determination of the extent of damages. Local officials initially would not allow entry into the damaged areas, citing health and safety concerns, the truth being that emergency recovery procedures were still being performed.

Eventually damage inspections were performed. Totaling over $420 million in damages (1979 dollars), including sixty-five homes completely destroyed, with additional seventy-five+ homes damaged. Amazingly, only 3 deaths and approximately 500 injuries had occurred. (I believe special assessment legislation was enacted due to the timing of the tornado and the damage recorded.)

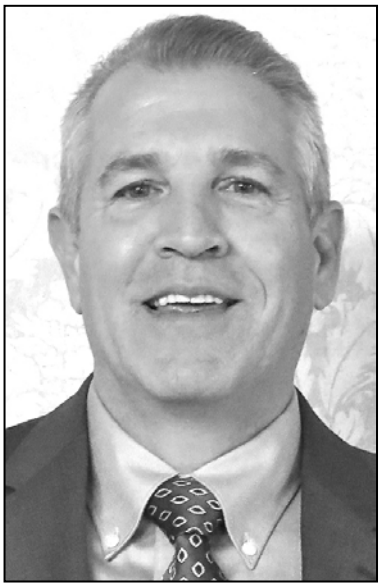
Note: Revaluation companies at that time paid their residential data collectors based upon counts of completed data collection of individual homes. While I understand this, I lost the weeks' worth of inspections, as the damaged area was where I had been working during the week prior to the tornado. (Most of the homes I had worked on were now gone, or damaged. If nothing remained then how could I expect to collect on non-existing dwellings? That was the Company original reasoning). Eventually, the information I had gathered was used to create the October 1st history of these properties (and hopefully) used to help with the property resolutions regarding adjustments on each damaged property. I have never regretted my minor time loss, as I have always felt extremely fortunate to be able to write about this near life ending adventure.

Note On October 3, 1979 at approximately 3:00pm an F4 tornado traveled through the towns of Windsor, Windsor Locks and Suffield. For more reading on the subject, turn on the CAAO web site, Research / Historian Committee, *History of Connecticut Assessors, Volume #2, page 35.*

The following write-ups on Connecticut assessors were done as personal interviews with the CAAO Research/Historian Committee

David Dietsch

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on October 21, 2021 with Charles Agli, Robert Musson, Joan Robinson, Marsha Standish, Walter Kent and Patricia Hedwall in attendance.)



CAAO President 2009-2010
CAAO Assessor of the Year 2012
CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2016
CAAO Continuing Service Award 2004
CAAO Presidential Award 2011

David was born and raised in Waterbury. His family relocated to Wolcott as he was starting 4th grade. After attending college for a while, David and a friend went into business for themselves doing roofing and siding

Dave married his wife and high school sweetheart Lori in 1984, had his first son in March of 1986 and fell off a roof on Friday June 13, 1986. This accident changed his outlook for the future. He returned to Central Connecticut State University and finished his degree in 1987.

In 1987, David joined the firm of KVS Information Services as an appraisal trainee. The company was gearing up to do the revaluation of Cheshire, CT. (Cheshire was the first KVS job in Connecticut). David started tracing data onto field cards and quickly moved through advancing positions until he was finally "prepping" the jobs. During his 10 years with KVS, they performed 11 Connecticut revaluations. Dave would go in, hire and train a crew and do all things residential. His longtime deputy, Armand Carbone, also worked with KVS doing commercial properties.

Armand headed to Waterbury first and Dave took the job of Assessor in October of 1996 where he served for over 25 years, before taking his pension and working part time for the Town of Colebrook.

At the time of his hiring, Waterbury was the "poster child" for avoiding revaluations. The 1980 revaluation was to have been the first computerized revaluation. It was not implemented. The City took the residential numbers and handwrote them onto the 1965 field cards. They then hired an appraiser to reappraise the commercial properties. Every one of them appraised at 25% higher than the computerized figures. This prompted a large court case, the Chamber of Commerce v the City of Waterbury. The City prevailed and phased-in the numbers in over three years. KVS had attempted to do the 1990 revaluation. It showed a shift in values that City leaders refused to accept. It was not implemented.

In 1999, the State assigned an oversite committee to oversee the running of the City of Waterbury. Creative bookkeeping had led to many financial issues. A revaluation was mandated. Sabre Systems was hired to do a 2000 revaluation of the City but they defaulted.

David did his first Waterbury revaluation for 2001 with Sabre Systems. Although the revaluation was implemented, State laws had changed, and Dave was mandated by the State to do a 2002 revaluation. Sanya Ahn had been the project manager for Sabre and was assigned the task. Sanya later started working for Waterbury as the Senior Assessment Analyst

State oversite was relinquished after the City was able to produce five balanced budgets in a row. By 2007, Sabre Systems had abandoned software support so the revaluation work was done by Total Valuation using Quality Date software.

The 2022 revaluation is being done by E-Quality and includes a flyover and change detection software, which compares the computerized sketches to the footprint of buildings acquired during a flyover.

David firmly believes that this technology is the way to go. It allows you to target your efforts and eliminates the need for full measure and listings thus lowering the costs of revaluation. As an example, Waterbury's 2001 revaluation cost $2.1 million while the contract for the 2022 (including the flyover) is $485,000.

New technologies, including change detection software and Internet access to property information (GIS and sales) could greatly reduce the need for visiting properties every five or ten years.

The new technology, however, requires the change in the statutes regarding inspection requirements. This would be much better for cost reductions than the concept of regionalization.

While David has been in office, the ratios between personal property (including motor vehicles) has not always been equitable. When he first took on Waterbury, it was not unusual for a taxpayer (with a mil rate of 97+) to be paying more taxes on his vehicle than on his three-family house. It became common for people and businesses to register their vehicles anywhere else. So, the City hired Connecticut Tax Fraud Bureau to find and identify the vehicles that should be added to the Grand List. A thorough investigation is made before any vehicle is added. This probably adds 2000, 3000, vehicles a year.

David is the first to add that he would look forward to the time when we no longer assess motor vehicles, but he doesn't see it happening soon.

Dinto Electric v the City of Waterbury ensued. The Waterbury company had a fleet of vehicles registered in other towns. At the time the law stated that a company's vehicles should be taxed in the Town in which the company was based. As time went on, several other companies joined the suit including American Driving School. In the end, the judge decided that the taxes were due to Waterbury.

Shortly after this decision, however, the law was changed to allow vehicles to be taxed in the town where the vehicle most often was garaged.

David became involved with the Legislative Committee when Pat Hedwall appointed him a tri-chair with Tony Homicki and Steve Kosofsky. After his first year, he remembers thinking that the Legislature was like a sausage factory. No one should really see what it takes to get a bill through. But he persevered. He was very active when he and John Chaponis lobbied for and succeeded in getting Bill 10-84 (The Assessors' Bill) passed. This took the position of assessors out of the election statutes and put it into the public employee statutes. He remembers testifying to the committee about the amount and types of political pressures that were placed on many assessors.

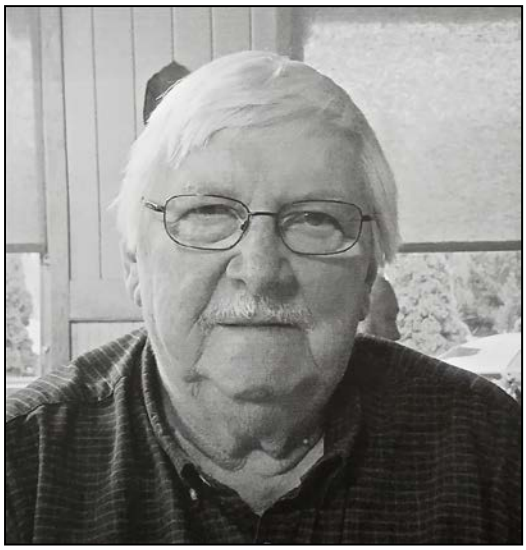
David feels that the 2022 revaluation will be a challenge. The City has traditionally had a very large commercial base. This will shift due to the tremendous increases in residential values and the declining commercial properties. Although they have been forewarned, local officials are not happy about this situation.

During his years in the field of assessing, David has served on many committees including the Legislative Committee, Motor Vehicle Committee, Special Events and the CCMA Committee; He also received the Sherry Vermilya Award at the 2011 Northeast Conference. But Dave says that some of his best times were with "THE BAND". He fondly remembers the trips they made while performing, such as to Boston for the IAAO Conferences in 2004 and 2022, and Niagara Falls Canada in 2019, and the comradery that was always present.

When asked if he would do it all over again, he hesitated. "Although I loved the work, it's that pressure. I would not wish it on anyone."

Norman Wood

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on September 16, 2021 with Charles Agli, Charles Danna, Joan Robinson, Walter Kent and Patricia Hedwall in attendance)



Norm Wood's (not the forest just the one tree) career in appraisal and assessment began in 1968 when his Aunt Jeanette noticed a job opening for the Knowles Company as a data collector. After being accepted for the position, Norm worked around the state of Maine for years.

From there he worked as a data collector for United Appraisal in Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and finally into Connecticut.

In the late 1970s Norm was working as a supervisor for the revaluations of Old Saybrook, Essex, Old Lyme and Madison. While working on the revaluation in Madison, then assessor Ed Clifford mentioned that he was planning to leave the position of assessor and asked if he would be interested. Norm took over the position as assessor in 1980 still finishing up the revaluation work.

One of his major headaches was that Madison did not have any assessment maps at the time. Instead, Norm used deed references and drew up the map of the downtown area. Although this later helped support values for court cases, it was too much work to continue with the rest of the town.

During his time in Madison, Norm began taking CAAO assessment classes to finally earn his CCMA.

In 1984, Norm went back to work in revaluation with Sabre Systems. He did revaluations in Ridgefield, New Britain, Bristol and Middletown.

In 1987, the Town of Colchester's assessor's position opened after the death of Brenda Vuolo. Norm accepted the position. He suggested to Duncan Green, the first selectman, that he could do some of revaluation duties (personnel property and mobile homes) in house. This saved the town a considerable amount of money on their contract.

While working in Colchester, Norm met and married his wife, Carol. Carol served as the deputy assessor in Norwich for many years.

Norm left Colchester in 1990 and returned to revaluation work with SLF Appraisals working in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Ohio and upper state New York. He did a good deal of commercial work over the years.

Norm took the position of assessor in Old Saybrook in 1998, and prepared for a 1999 revaluation. After 23 years, he is now serving under his fourth first selectman. He has handled a number of changes as well as some controversies.

By 2003, the laws had changed. The state had begun requiring revaluations every five years. After reviewing Norm's resume, Selectman Michael Pace asked Norm if he could complete the revaluation in house. Although no monetary incentive was provided, Norm decided to give it a try with the help of Steve Flannigan who provided commercial values.

Over the years there have been some challenges. The 2008 revaluation was more difficult due to the declining values of properties, but commercial valuation help was still available. That same year, the board of assessment appeals didn't finish its hearings until July.

2013 continued the pattern with many of the normal day-to-day functions covered by staff members. By 2018, Selectman Carl Fortuna decided to go out to bid and was rewarded with a low bid by Vision Appraisal.

During these years, however, Norm had been doing part time work in other towns. Salem, East Lyme, Groton and Stonington all benefitted from his expertise.

One lawsuit of note involved the railroad. For the years 2018-19 a restaurant building on railroad land was assessed, with the land that it sat on, as taxable property. This was based on the fact that, since it was leased property, it was taxable. The suit was brought claiming that as Federal property and it was tax exempt. After several years, a settlement was reached. The buildings would be taxable, but the land would be exempt. No judicial decision was reached, but this status remains.

Looking back over his five decades in appraisal and assessment, Norm notes that the advent and development of CAMA systems has really changed the game and made things more efficient-though everything ultimately goes back to informed and consistent data collection.

When asked about his plans for the future, Norm has stated that he would probably remain in Old Saybrook at least through the revaluation of 2023.

Would he do it all again? All things being equal…probably. But he admits that he would rather be keypunching than dealing with the fickle public.

Richard J. Lasky, Sr.

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on October 21, 2021 with Charles Agli, Joan Robinson, Marsha Standish, Robert Musson, Walter Kent and Patricia Hedwall in attendance.)

In the late 1970s, Richard (Rich) Lasky was working as a Century 21 Real Estate agent in western Connecticut when the Connecticut market went sour. Since houses weren't selling, he decided to move his family to Kissimmee, Florida. He worked as produce/grocery manager at the local A&P while attending college under the GI Bill. In April 1981, he received an Associate in Science degree, specializing in Real Estate Investment and Appraisal from Valencia College in Orlando, Florida.

In June of 1980 Richard was offered the position of Deputy Appraiser at the Osceola County Office of the Appraiser, located in Kissimmee, Florida. While employed there he attended two IAAO courses, Fundamentals of Real Property (December 1981) and The Income Approach to Valuation (May 1982).

Rich was lured back to Connecticut in early 1983 when a friend offered to buy him a new bass guitar if he agreed to return and play in his band. Three weeks later, he received his guitar.

Richard settled in Brookfield, Connecticut and actively sought a position in the Connecticut assessment field. He provided his resume to every town within a reasonable commuting distance. While checking the "Help Wanted" section of the newspaper, Richard saw an opening for an Assistant Assessor in New Milford. He immediately went to New Milford town hall to inquire about the position and asked why he wasn't contacted about the opening. Assessor Ron Parks told him the salary being offered was less than half his current earnings. Richard said he would take the job and thus began his State of Connecticut assessing career.

Later that year the position of Assistant Assessor opened in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Richard applied as the job paid a measurable amount more and was closer to his home. After interviewing with Al Garzi, he was hired and started working in Ridgefield in October 1983.

Richard had attended Introduction of Connecticut Assessment Administration and Law in June 1983 and received his CCMA in December 1983.

In June 1984, Richard took the position of Deputy Assessor in Bristol, CT under Assessor Jim Ramos. When Jim left Bristol six months later for another Connecticut town, Rich stepped up and stayed the Bristol Assessor until his retirement in 2008.

Richard commented that some of his fondest memories recalled the number of fellow assessors who offered congratulations, guidance and assistance to the "new guy" when he first became an assessor.

After his retirement from Bristol, Richard signed on as the part-time Assessor in Franklin, Connecticut working two days a week. Several other towns have drawn on his assessment expertise on a part-time basis, including Burlington, Middlefield and Norfolk. Richard also accepted a job in Canton, CT because it was closer to his home. Upon giving his notice in Franklin, the Selectman asked if there was anything Franklin could do to keep him there. Richard mentioned the higher salary rate in Canton. The Selectman said, "We can do that". The issue of the long commute to Franklin was answered with "How about this: Work one day here and the other day from home." Richard decided to stay in Franklin.

While Richard started in Bristol, ESPN was in its infancy, but growing very fast. Many major building projects and specialized equipment made for interesting assessment issues.

Another interesting case arose with Lake Compounce Amusement Park in Bristol. The property had amassed about $2,000,000 in back taxes and was headed for foreclosure. When new owners acquired the property, a lawsuit was filed against the city contesting the assessment. Bristol eventually won the case in court. Connecticut legislation passed shortly thereafter removing the tax liability for fiscal years 1991 & 1992 on any 200-acre, century-old amusement park. The city never received its back taxes.

While working in Bristol, Richard also was on the Chamber of Commerce Development Committee. He received his State of Connecticut General Appraiser Certificate License in 1992.

During his career, Richard has been an active member of the IAAO and NRAAO as well as the CAAO. He served on several CAAO committees including Membership, Ethics, Data Processing, Handbook, Revaluation and Motor Vehicles.

Richard and his wife, Pat, have been the hosts of the Assessors' Karaoke night at UConn every year since 2004.

Rich will probably be best remembered as one of the founding members of the Assessors' band Manifestly Excessive (12-119).[8] The band has performed at many CAAO functions since 1995. They also played the NRAAO Conventions at the Mohegan Sun and Atlantic City, NJ, the 2004 IAAO Convention in Boston, MA and most recently, the 2019 IAAO convention in Niagara Falls, Canada.

His son, Richard Lasky, Jr. has followed in his father's footsteps and is currently the Assessor in Portland, CT.

[8] The history of the CAAO band can be found at caao.com, Research/Historian Committee, Volume #2 *History of Connecticut Assessors*, page 44.

Robin O'Loughlin

(Intreview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on March 20,2022 with Patricia Hedwall. Shelby Jackson and Walter Kent in attendance.)

CAAO President 2002
CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2007
NRAAO President 2010

Since her stepfather was a principal in the Perry Agency, a real estate firm in Waterford, Robin was raised in a household where real estate and valuation were constant topics of conversation.

Her first experience was in 1986 when she held a summer position with SLF Appraisal, Inc. She checked field cards and data collection by others and, in general, became familiar with the functions of appraising. Two years later, after graduating from college, she continued with SLF at data collecting as well as reviewing the work of others and sitting for hearings.

Robin joined Cole Layer Trumble Company in 1990 where she continued to grow in appraising and gaining more experience with commercial properties. She worked on revaluations throughout much of Middlesex, New London and New Haven counties. Her mother, Barbara Perry, was also working for the company at the time as a project manager.

While she was working in Windham with Joan Paskewich in 1993, the Town of Deep River called her to review some materials from the latest revaluation and help with the pricing schedule. While there, they asked her if she would be interested in the position of Assessor. She was not certified as a CCMA, but that was not a requirement at the time. Joan was very encouraging and supportive, and explained that once a part of the assessment community in Connecticut, "any help I might need would be readily available."

Since she was expecting her daughter at the time, the idea of having a specific work area on a daily basis and not having to travel to various venues was enticing. So, a new career was born along with Caitlyn.

Robin began working toward her certification and taking classes. Experience is the best teacher and three years was the requirement for sitting for the exam at the time. She studied and learned. Whenever she would have a question, Judy Rivers in Essex would say, "This is the way Walter (Birck) told me to do it, so this is what you do."

In 1996, Robin remembers sitting for the CCMA Exam. After the morning session she recalls that it took everything that she had to go back for the afternoon session. But she also recalls how good she felt at being successful. The test was difficult but fair.

This memory remained with her while she was co-chairing the CCMA Committee. Her goal was to maintain the structure, integrity and credibility of the exam. She is very concerned about the more recent complaints that fewer people are passing the exam and that it is too hard. The test is not the problem.

When certification was divided into CCMA I and CCMA II, she worked hard with David Valenti to ensure that the tests were structured with all courses considered, but also so that you could not pass the level two exam without truly answering any questions concerning the income approach.

When asked about the assessors who impressed her, she recalled working in Stonington for Fran Callahan measuring and listing. She had to hand price. He helped her understand the pricing ladder and was very patient and understanding. But she adds that one of the advantages of working in many towns during revaluations was that it gave the opportunity to meet and learn from many assessors and build a network. Hers included Judy Rivers, Maureen McGuinness, Marsha Standish, and Joan Paskewich.

She first became a CAAO committee member under Joan when she was placed on the Bylaws Committee with Joe Dakers. She then served on the Professional Development and Awards Committee with Gordon Donley and Catherine Daboll and also served on the Education, Legislative, Special Events, Membership and Nominating Committees.

Bill Gaffney encouraged her to go for the presidency and she served as President in 2002. “I just didn’t want to break it!”, she said about her prime goal. But she learned to really appreciate the work being done by all the committees and their members and the fact that the members of our organization were always there to help each other.

Robin then became active with the Northeast Regional Association of Assessing Officers serving as the CT representative from 2001-2010 and then as president in 2010.

As far as the future goes, she is truly concerned that many of the newcomers to our profession have never actually had the experience of measuring and listing and actually pricing properties. This activity forces you to really learn and understand the pricing functions. Things like grade and depreciation are often overlooked. Computerization has taken away much of this understanding. We need to get our people out to measure and list.

One case of interest that Robin is currently working on involves the exemption status of the Mt. St. John’s School. After a period of declining enrollment, the school finally closed in 2019. She removed their tax exemption and they have filed suit. She is looking forward to the decision. She feels confidant since she believes that a precedent case in Berlin supports her stand.

One fun remembrance is of the “Golf Group”. Robin had never really played golf, but she chided some of the fellows into taking her golfing with them. The group consisted of Bruce Chaplinski, Bill Gaffney and Bob Coates. She became “Bobbie”. The group would meet on the Sunday prior to a UCONN school and play.

About two years after Robin took the job in Deep River, she encouraged her mom, Barbara to take the job in New London, “You will love it, you’re busy all the time.” Barbara did take the job and, since then, this assessment family has grown. Robin’s sister, Ellen and Robin’s niece Megan, are assessors in Massachusetts and her late brother-in-law, Rick was an assessor in New Hampshire. Some things are just in the blood.

Robin has been in Deep River ever since. She thinks that if pension portability had been available, she might have thought about changing, but admits there is a lot to be said for remaining in one town. The knowledge of the town just makes the job so much easier. She has no plan for moving in the near future.

When asked the final question, “If you had it to do again, would you?”, her answer was, “Yes. I love it!”. But, just for the record, I have on the best authority, that while she was still in college, she proclaimed to her mother that she would never be doing this job for very long.

In addition to her other accomplishments, Robin received the 2007 CAAO Distinguished Service Award.

Shelby Jackson

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on March 24, 2022, with Charles Danna, Robert Musson, Suzanne Topliff and Patricia Hedwall in attendance.)

Shelby grew-up in Providence, RI, where he attended public schools until high school when he attended La Salle Academy – a private college prep school. After graduating from La Salle in 1977 and following a brief hitch in the Navy, he attended the Community College of RI and Providence College studying Management and Finance.

After graduating from Providence College with a B.S. degree in Finance, he worked as a real estate broker and appraiser during the mid-1980's. Things were going well until the Savings and Loan crisis hit between 1987 and 1989, and real estate sales dried up. Recently married, Shelby needed to earn a steady living, so he took a job with MMC (precursor to Vision Appraisal) as a data collector.

Between 1989 and 1991, he worked on several revaluation projects in CT, including Mansfield, Coventry, East Lyme and Old Lyme. While spending a long, cold winter in Old Lyme working under Walter Kent, Shelby decided he liked the idea of becoming an assessor. After moving through the ranks at MMC, he was ready to make his move. When the Assessor position opened in Burrillville, RI, he applied for the position and became the first appointed assessor in the town's history on April 1, 1991 with a starting salary of $30,300 and a new baby at home.

Shelby remained in Burrillville for 8 years, taking advantage of every appraisal and assessing class he could, honing his skills and experience. At the time, the RI certification program required 4 classes and 2 years of experience to obtain the RICA certificate. After becoming certified, Shelby went on to become the President of the RI Association of Assessing Officers and the RI Association of Tax Officials. During the 1990's Shelby became a certified general appraiser, and in 1997, he was appointed to the RI Appraisal Board, the State authority that regulates appraisers and appraisal licensing in RI. Our Shelby was no shrinking violet.

Shelby and family settled down in Burrillville, where he went on to serve as part-time Tax Collector for the Oakland/Mapleville Fire District. In 1991, Shelby became involved with the Society of Professional Assessors (SPA) and went to as many conferences as possible, networking and learning from assessors throughout NY, NJ, MA and CT. During his tenure in Burrillville, he completed a full revaluation, a digital mapping project and established a state-of-the-art GIS system. He recalls that it was a great place to start and progress in his new career, but he was outgrowing the job and by 1997, he was ready for a new challenge.

Then in late 1998, he noticed an ad in the IAAO newsletter for the Assessor's position in Wallingford, CT with a starting salary of $65,000. He thought he'd give it a try and was more

than a little surprised when he told his wife and she replied, “Great! When are we moving?” When offered the position, he felt like he hit a home run. He left RI on a Friday and showed up in CT on Monday, commuting 2 hours each way until the family of four settled in the Yalesville section of Wallingford 6 months later.

Wallingford was a real change for him, because Burrillville was a smaller town with few commercial properties and court cases. He knew he’d have to upgrade his knowledge of commercial and industrial property appraisal and take classes for his CT certification.

After being in Wallingford for about a month, he found himself in Superior Court for the Bristol-Myers Squibb tax appeal. The 180-acre campus style facility included 1 million SF of highly specialized buildings; including a vivarium (animal research lab), designed for virus research. The town’s value was $150 million. The town and Shelby ultimately prevailed in that case. Months later he was involved with a revaluation, another digital mapping project and computer conversions surrounding Y2K – Welcome to CT!

When he started in Wallingford, the town had a CLT CAMA system, but it was obsolete by then current standards. During the first revaluation (2001) Vision Appraisal converted and updated the CAMA system. Next, Shelby updated the tax parcel maps into a digital format. He credits Dennis Hlavac for being a big part of his success. “Dennis was a very thorough, detail-oriented man, and knew the town inside and out – we made a great team”.

Also, during that first year, Shelby concentrated on his CT certification, and got a waiver for all classes except 1A and 1B. He remembered being overconfident, the exam would not be a problem because he’d always scored high on IAAO courses. “I’d never taken an exam that rigorous in my whole life!” He was sweating it out until he got the news he’d done well on the exam and gained a great deal of respect for CAAO and the certification system”.

From the very beginning, Shelby became active in his new community becoming a Cub Scout Leader, active at the Masonic Lodge in Wallingford and American Legion Post 187. He has risen to the level of District Deputy Grand Master of Connecticut and Associate Trustee on the Board of Masonicare – the largest home health care provider in CT. He also serves as a commissioner for the Wallingford Housing Authority.

The SPA has always been near and dear to his heart, and Shelby stayed active keeping the workshops going for the last two decades, first as President and later Executive Director. He is proud of the many high quality seminars over the years and credits help from his friend and colleague Mel Spivak. As out of state travel was getting harder to do, and while also being active with CAAO, IAAO, NRAAO and New Haven County, he still hopes the SPA will succeed and encourages new assessors to get involved.

When asked about the highlights of his career, Shelby said that he was proud of his involvement with the CAAO. “I am pleased to have brought along several excellent people into the assessing profession, one of whom was Stuart Topliff.” Stuart while serving as president of the CAAO returned the favor by appointing Shelby as Chairman of the Curriculum Development Committee. While chairman, Shelby led the committee in the total rewriting of the Board of

Assessment Appeals Handbook. “The committee accomplished so much because we had a lot of talented people working together”.

Other highlights include the negotiation of PILOT agreements for complex utility properties and the adjudication of hundreds of commercial and industrial appeals through the Superior Court system. He has also served as President of the New Haven County Association and was honored by the NRAAO with the 2020 Sherry Vermilia Award for outstanding service. The SPA honored him with the Dennis D. Sheehan Memorial Award for Distinguished Service in 2014.

After serving for 22 years, Shelby retired from Wallingford in 2021 and assumed the job of Assessor in Naugatuck replacing his long-time friend and SPA colleague Carol Ann Tyler. “Carol Ann did a great job of improving the office and put us in a position to take it to the next level”.

He said he’s working harder now than he has in years, but feels revitalized by the challenges and opportunities to put Naugatuck on the map as a well-run professional office. Currently conducting a revaluation and CAMA system conversion in Naugatuck for the 2022 grand list, it will be the 7th revaluation of his career. For the past several years, Shelby has also been working in private practice doing fee appraisals, property tax consulting and revaluation assignments. Shelby plans to continue his career in public service for several more years, and when the time is right, move fully into private practice as his retirement job.

Debra Gernhardt

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on May 19, 2022 with Patricia Hedwall. Charles Agli and Walter Kent in attendance.)

Debra was raised as a middle child in a family of 14 children. Her father worked as the head of the highway department of D.O.T. He also ran his own survey business. As a result, Deb was introduced to maps and mapping at a very young age.

Like many of us, she sort of "fell into" the assessment field. In 1986 she was working as a volunteer EMT for the town of Salem. When the town decided to have a paid Emergency Medical Technician position, she became the first paid EMT in the town.

Shortly thereafter, the position of assistant assessor for the town of Salem opened. The town fathers allowed her to park the ambulance outside of the town hall during business hours while she filled the assessment position. If there was an emergency call, she could leave at any time. So, in 1988 her new career began. As far as the two certainties of life were concerned, death and taxes, she had both covered.

Debra worked under assessor Evelyn Cunningham. At the same time, Joan Paskewich and Joan Robinson were acting as consultants for the town. They provided a strong base of assessment knowledge and experience.

In 1995, Evelyn semi-retired and she traded places with Deb. Deb became the assessor and Evelyn became the assistant. Deb remained as the assessor in Salem until 2001 when she assumed the position of assistant assessor in Hebron under Bob Musson.

When Bob retired in 2011, Debra assumed the position of assessor until August 2022. It was then that she decided to retire, after 34 years in the assessment field, to live the "good life".

Although both towns were very supportive of her education and advancement, having been an EMT, Debbie felt empathy with the public. She felt that she needed the fulfillment of helping them whenever she could. She was determined to perfect her ability to interact with the public and educate them on the often confusing aspects of assessment and taxation. She built on her relationship with the public by explaining such things as pro-rated new construction, motor vehicle supplemental billing, and the multiple years involved in taxation.

One day while in Hebron, she spent a good deal of time with a gentleman explaining the documentation that was required to prorate his billing for a sold car. He became very abusive and rude as he stormed out of the office. This was not one of Debbie's best days. That same day her dog became very ill and had to be euthanized late that night. It was a very depressing time. The next morning, the same man entered her office. He carried a box of chocolates and apologized

for his rude behavior. He had thought about what she had said and understood why the documentation was needed. At that point, she burst into tears. As he again apologized, she explained about her dog, but he made her realize that her relationship with the public was successful. No one really teaches the public about assessment and taxation, so being able to diffuse their concerns is important.

Deb felt inspired by the support she received from her fellow assessors. She especially recalls the help and support of Catherine Daboll and Joan Paskewich for day-to-day matters, while she considers John Chaponis and Steve Juda her revaluation and legislative gurus.

The towns of Salem and Hebron are very similar in many ways. Both towns are agricultural in nature with a small commercial base. The town of Hebron has grown quicker than Salem. It has two golf courses and a newer assisted living facility, therefore Deb hasn't had any really pressing court cases.

Although Deb has not actively participated in the CAAO as a committee member, she is very grateful to those who have contributed. She realized early on, that the CAAO and its members are a type of family who are willing to help others with any problems that might arise. In addition, she praised the many tools and publications that are available to members. She especially noted the Assessors' Handbook as one of her go to tools.

The 1991 revaluation in Salem was the first to use a CAMA system. Prior to that, all data had been handwritten. But today, virtually everything is computerized. The CAMA system is linked to the administrative system that is linked to the GIS system, the building department and the tax collector system. Deb misses the face-to-face time with the public. Since everything is available online, there is often little foot traffic in the office. Debra retired in 2022 to Alabama, but she will miss her time with the public.

David Gardner

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on June16, 2022 with Patricia Hedwall, Charles Agli, Charles Danna, Walter Kent, and Robert Musson)

IAAO Chapter President 2002-2012

David grew up in Ashford, Connecticut. After graduating from college, he worked as a candidate recruiter for his party. In 1981 he recruited himself to run as First Selectman… and he won the election. He continued for two terms.

While there, he became familiar with the workings of the Ashford Assessor's Office. He realized that the current board of assessor format should be changed to the position of a professional assessor. The town hired their first professional assessor, Emily Kasacek, in 1982.
Dave started taking assessment classes in 1984. (At that time there was no experience requirement for taking the certification examination.) He took the exam for certification in 1985.

While in the Selectman's Office, Lesher-Glendinning was hired by Ashford to do the revaluation in 1985.

Dave was hired by Lesher-Glendinning the fall of 1986. By this time, he was no longer in office. He did work on revaluations in Seymour, Roxbury, Eastford and Redding. His first CAMA jobs were in Cromwell and Hampton in 1988.

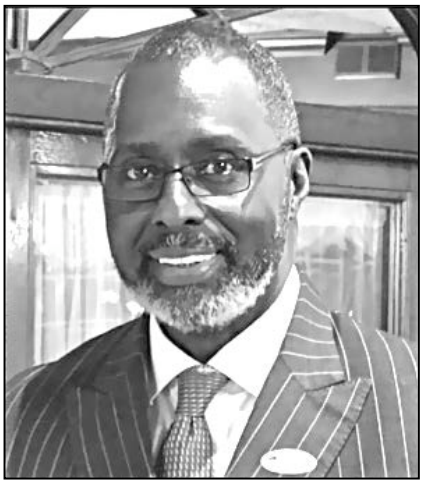
In 1992, Dave was hired in Willington. He worked three days a week and continued to do special projects for Lesher-Glendinning.

In 1993, David started taking IAAO classes that were sponsored by the Candidate's Club. He continued until he received his Assessment Administration Specialist (AAS) designation in 1996. Dave was hired by Simsbury in 1997 and continued until 2019. He went to Farmington in 2019 and has been there since.

While in Windham County, Dave was active on many CAAO committees. These included Motor Vehicles serving as chairman, PA 490, Handbook, Election, Special Designations, Awards, Revaluation, Nominating and Membership.

Joseph Dakers, Sr.

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on December 15, 2022 with Charles Agli, Robert Musson, Marsha Standish, Walter Kent and Patricia Hedwall in attendance.)



CAAO Presidential Award 2003
Continuous Service Award 2000
Assessor of the Year Award 2007 & 2018

In February of 1975, a young man named Joseph Dakers, at the tender age of 19, entered the Hartford Assessors' Office as a Clerk Typist as part of the CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) program. Little did he know that he would spend the next 27 years in this office.

Joe boasts that at the time he could type 60 words a minute on a Royal Standard typewriter and that his take home pay was almost $100 weekly.

When Joe entered the office, he was met by a cadre of assessing legends. His direct supervisor was Richard Wandy, who was the Chief Assessment of the Personal Property Division, but he also worked with Alexander Standish, Assistant Assessor, Henry Phillips, Chief Assessment Technician Real Property Division and John McDermott, Assessor. Joe declares that all of them were very supportive and encouraging and he learned many lessons from all of them. One day, Mr. Standish, as Joe still refers to him, placed a book on his desk and told him to "Read and learn these." The book was a copy of Title XII, the Connecticut State laws of assessing.

Joe quickly was promoted first to Senior Clerk Typist then to Assessment Aide until in 1981 he was promoted to Personal Property Appraiser. He states that John McDermott left the City's employ several times to work with private consulting firms. On at least three occasions when he returned to his position in Hartford, he gave Joe a raise "I remember telling him at one point that I could not wait for him to leave again in hopes that when he returned, I would get another promotion."

From working with these colleagues Joe said, "I learned many things that I carry with me today. These include tax appeal preparation. The importance of paying attention to what is <u>not</u> in the documents that you are reviewing and the value of knowing the applicable statutes."

In 1978, Hartford conducted an in-house revaluation. "It was an enormous undertaking but, we had the staff and the talent at that time with a staff of 20-25; Tony Homicki, Jim Ramos, Kathy Rubenbauer, Michael Miano, Alexander Standish, Robert Haas, etc. "

During that time, Hartford conducted a physical inspection annually calling on all businesses in town. They had two Personal Property Appraisers and as the season was closing, a real property appraiser came in to assist. Today, there is an almost total reliance on property declarations supplemented by audits. Things have changed!

His first success with a court case was Connecticut Mutual Insurance Company v, City of Hartford. It dealt with the valuation of computer equipment. Judge Aronson presided.

“I remember having brought a real estate terminology textbook with me compiled by Byrl N. Boyce. As I was sitting in the bullpen area of the courtroom, someone behind me leaned over the seat and pointed out to me that they had written the book that I would be referencing. You might imagine my shock finding out that it was Dr. Boyce who would be an expert witness for the plaintiff. In any event, Hartford prevailed on a decision from Judge Aronson.”

Another case was against the Xerox Corporation concerning the valuation of their leased copier equipment. Although the city prevailed, the CT Supreme Court later decided in favor of Xerox, At that level, it’s a battle of attorneys.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that Joe was asked to present a paper on the copier industry at the 1995 I.A.A.O. Lake Tahoe conference and was asked to present again at the 1996 conference.

Since then, he has received a Certificate of Appreciation for his work on the “Authorative Text Task Force” (2022) updating their property Appraisal Glossary.

He has also been a participant in ACES and CAAO workshops.

Joe left Hartford and became the Director of Assessments for the Town of West Hartford in December 2002. In Joe’s opinion, Hartford was a very political arena whereas in West Hartford, officials must go through the town manager with requests for information. This acts as a kind of firewall. But this does not preclude elected officials from making inquiries on their own property.

Joe feels that one of the best things about CAAO is its dedication to professionalism and keeping the membership abreast of current issues in the field. The schools and seminars are great opportunities to have “face time” and develop rapport with colleagues. He has worked on many committees including Personal Property (1996-2008), Bylaws (1994-2009) and Education (2001-2008).

Joe believes that mandatory recertification is necessary to ensure that we keep up with current valuation trends, topics and changes in the legislation and to maintain a true sense of professionalism.

Throughout his career, Joe has shown a compassion and understanding of interpersonal relationships both within and outside the assessment field. He believes in listening to people with the goal towards solving issues. His father said, “Be careful how you talk to people because you never know what they are going through!” and Joe has listened well.

When asked if he would do it all again, his reply was NO. I might have been a trial attorney. My father always thought I could be good at that.

Brian Smith

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on February 16, 2023 with Patricia Hedwall. Charles Agli, Robert Musson and Marsha Standish in attendance.)

CAAO Assessor of the Year Award 2017
CAAO Distinguished Award 2008
CAAO Continuing Service Award 2001
NRAAO Outstanding Service Award 2003

In his life before assessing, Brian grew up in East Hartford and worked turning a wrench as a mechanic and installing overhead garage doors. During this period, he got laid off from work and was "Mr. Mom" for a while. At this point, his father-in-law, Francis Kirwin, said, "My daughter is not going to live in poverty for the rest of her life. Do this kid." So, he started taking the courses in assessing.

Brian had been working for Frank doing field work in some small towns and had a taste of the job, so he asked his father for $45 to take the first assessing course (there were three at the time). His father was excited about him going back to school and gave him the money. This was in 1980. Chuck Sweeney was his first instructor "on the road". This was good since he had time to absorb information during the week between sessions. His second class was at UConn with Tom Browne. This was a different story. A lot of information was crammed into that week.

Brian was certified as a CCMA in 1983 having never worked in an assessor's office. Times have changed since then.

He was working as a data collector for Sabre Systems during the 1983 New Britain revaluation when a job opened up in Southington. His interview with Henry Phillips was interesting. "Do you hunt? Do you fish? Do you want the job? It became obvious that calls had been made in the area among those in the know, his boss at Sabre knew he was leaving before Brian did.

Working with Hank was great! "He taught me more that I had learned in the classes." There was a lot of building going on at the time. Hank showed him what to look for and how to value it. But it was a long drive, through Hartford traffic every day.

Manchester had openings available. They were doing an "in house" revaluation. He became an assistant to Dick Vincent. Up to this time, most of Brian's work revolved around real estate, but Dick believed in cross training. So, Bill Moon, who had been doing personal property and motor vehicles was assigned to real estate and Brian was assigned to personal property. Little did he know that this would become his specialty.

During the 14 years that he worked in Manchester, Brian became involved with the IAAO and became interested in the personal property seminars often traveling with Joe Dakers and Rick Wandy. He was most impressed that it was assessors teaching assessors. That changed when industries became involved. From here he went into teaching personal property and chairing the Personal Property Committee for 25 years.

Brian went to East Hartford as the deputy in 2000. He really wasn't sure that he was doing the right thing in moving, but it seemed to be the time. In 16 years, Dick Buchanan had never taken a sick day. In the first week there, Dick called in sick and said, "By the way, you're due in court." Dick never went to court again. Brian became the "expert witness".

He remembers the Wallingford case on software. They won the case but lost the war when the law was changed making software nontaxable. And the Winchester case dealing with video tapes. But now we are dealing with fiber optics and cables and conduits.

Brian states that one thing about being an assessor is that you see things that most people cannot. An example he gives is when the old mills were being converted into apartments; he got to see the inner workings of the structures and the automation being built into new buildings.

When Richard retired as the assessor in 2005, Brian became the assessor. As he says it was a little freaky sitting at the same desk in the same office as father-in-law had in 1968. Back then we were very paper oriented; now we are so electronically oriented. Everything seems to be on the computer and Internet, but with that we have tended to lose a lot of peripheral information. The archives contained in old handwritten field cards, photos, arial photos and maps that cannot be replaced.

At the present time, the Town Hall is closed for remodeling and many people are working from home and rotating in office service. The staff depends on the phone and texting.

Brian continues with his teaching assignments including his Board of Assessment Appeals classes. Since the State has ceased to continue the classes, this is an important function.

When asked if he would do it again, Brian's response was, "Absolutely! I had fun and I didn't have to live in poverty. My father says it was the best $45 he ever spent."

Brian Smith officially retired May 2, 2023.

Brian was the recipient of CAAO Life Membership at the November 2, 2023 Fall CAAO Meeting.

Shawna Marie Baron

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on November 17, 2022, with Patricia Hedwall, Charles Agli, Shelby Jackson, and Robert Musson) Final draft written by Janet Baron.

CAAO Assessor of the Year Award 2024
CAAO President 2019-2020
CAAO Assessor of the Year Award 2013
CAAO Continuing Service Award 2009

Shawna has a degree in accounting and started her career as a fee appraiser for Hanson House in Stratford during the late 1980's. When the real estate market crashed in 1990, she sought a more stable position within the valuation profession. She saw an advertisement for a company called MMC that did revaluation work and thought this might be a good fit for her. MMC was the precursor of the company currently known as Vision Government Solutions. Dave Lisowski hired Shawna as a data collector, which became her springboard into Assessing.

Shawna quickly climbed the corporate ladder within MMC going from data collector up to project manager. As many may know being a Supervisor in Revaluation in New England calls for a lot of out of State work assignments. Shawna was a working mother with 2 young daughters at home and in 1997 she found herself starting her workday with a three-hour drive as her assignment at that time was in New Hampshire. One day during this period Shawna received a call from her mother who at the time was an appraiser herself and doing work in Bridgeport and needed help getting data in the Assessor's Office. Shawna worked Bridgeport's revaluation from 1990-1993 and fully understood their CAMA system. The system was called "Oasis" and to quote Shawna, "It should have been on an oasis because Dave Lisowski and I were the only ones who knew how it actually worked."

Shawna trekked off to Bridgeport to help her mother and this is when Shawna met Pam Davis, the new Assessor in Bridgeport. Pam was in the process of trying to establish better control over the vital records in her charge and at that time was not allowing appraisers access to the vault. Shawna explained to Pam her involvement with Bridgeport's revaluation project, thus convincing Pam to allow Shawna access to the vital records in the Assessor's Office making it much easier for Shawna to help her mother. Pam learned how knowledgeable Shawna was about the city and saw how proficient she was with the office CAMA system and asked if Shawna would give the Assessor's staff some training on how to value permits. Shawna agreed. When the training sessions ended, Shawna was asked by Pam, "How would you like to work here?" Pam went to the powers that be and had a position created for Shawna in the City of Bridgeport's Assessor's Office. Not only did Pam give Shawna her first assessing position, but she also allowed her to learn how municipalities work, get her assessing certification and manage the office staff consisting of 19 employees. "I will always be grateful to Pam Davis. Her belief in me was the foundation to the success I've enjoyed throughout my career."

After working two years for the City of Bridgeport, Shawna applied for a position in West Hartford and faced her first "Assessor Panel" interview. "It was so intimidating. I was glad just to survive it regardless of the outcome. A few days after my interview, a member of the panel reached out to me and expressed how well I did and that I would be a very good assessor someday. I am very grateful to her for her encouraging words, she may never know how much of an impact that call had on me." That person was Joan Paskewich.

Shawna's first town as the Assessor was in Brookfield where she worked from 2000-2004. She remembers on her very first day a handwritten letter awaited her on her desk from Ken Carvel, who at that time was the Assessor in Westport. Ken wrote to Shawna congratulating her on her new position. This made Shawna feel welcome amongst her new colleagues. As the Assessor, Shawna thought because Brookfield was in Fairfield County and it bordered Litchfield County it was important to attend the county assessor association meetings for both counties. These meetings became the foundation for the numerous leadership roles she would hold in the assessing profession. Shawna's first leadership role was in 2004 when she became the President of the Fairfield County Assessing Association and from 2007-2016 she was the County Rep for the Litchfield County Assessing Association. In 2004 Shawna became the Assessor in Cromwell where she has remained for the past 19 years. This move brought her to a new county and in 2009 she became the President of the Greater New London Area Assessing Association. Shawna believes the years she spent serving these organizations were very important and gave her a thorough understanding of the functions of CAAO and the role of the Executive Board.

It's been more than a quarter of a century since Shawna started her journey in assessing and along the way she has served on almost every committee that makes up CAAO. Shawna is a "Techie" so it's no wonder her first committee interest back in 2001 began with the Info Tech Committee (2001-2002; 2013-2018; 2021-Current), Motor Vehicle Committee (2001-2002; 2006-2017; 2023-Current), A.A.T. Committee (2003-2005), Legislative Committee (2003-2018), Nominating Committee (2007-2018), Membership Committee (2007-2018; 2023-Current), Ethics Committee (2011-2018), Education Committee (2004-2005; 2011-2016; 2019-2022), Finance Committee (2021-Current). Shawna did not just serve as a member on these committees; she was the Chairman of several of them. When asked what her favorite committee was, she quickly responded that she loved the work of the Membership Committee and enjoyed encouraging new members to get involved. As you can see from her own comprehensive list tracking the time span of each member for every committee they serve would be quite the undertaking. This is the type of stuff Shawna calls fun. The programmer in her enjoyed developing such a system and she in fact tracks all the members, the committees they serve and the years they serve on them along with any awards they may receive. She feels this is a great tool to have and it comes in handy, often needed to give the members the recognition they deserve. Shawna says it's the commitment of our members that makes our organization successful. Recognition is the only reward we have to give to show our gratitude.

Shawna's involvement in the valuation field and CAAO reaches further than just municipal appraising, revaluation and assessing. She is also a business owner and in 2013 she diversified from what was a real estate fee appraisal only business into Baron Appraisal Services LLC to include personal property auditing. In addition to serving CAAO, she was appointed by the Governor to serve on the State of Connecticut Real Estate Appraisal Commission (2014-present)

and appointed by OPM to serve on the Certified Connecticut Municipal Assessor Commission (2017-present). Shawna still sits as a commissioner on both the forementioned.

It was 2017 when Shawna threw her hat in the ring to run for CAAO Office. She was told by some it wasn't her time and by others that she would need to start at the Secretary position and couldn't just run for the Presidency, she had already received the Continuing Service Award in 2009 and was Assessor of the Year in 2013. She was confident that the 20 years of knowledge and experience she gained from her involvement within CAAO that she was ready. Despite what she was told, Shawna ran and won to become the first woman President Elect in 2017 and became the first woman 2-year term President in 2019-2020.

Shawna's confidence was at an all-time high. Besides her fear of public speaking, she thought being at the helm of CAAO should be a piece of cake and foresaw no problems. She charted out her plans, created her committees, adding 40 new appointments in her first year. Many of these new appointees were getting involved in CAAO for the very first time. She vowed to increase education for assessors and their staff members. She was in front of the initiative that implemented CAAO badges for all members. The barcoded badge replaced sign in/out sheets for workshops, seminars and classes enhancing the process for receiving course credits. In addition, she played an active role in the creation of the Head Moderator position. Having the support of her great office staff, committee chairs and the Executive Board she saw no derailments in sight and was enjoying her role as Madam President. Nothing was going to slow her down, nothing to the naked eye that is. What is one word that can't be seen, but would stop the world as we know it? …COVID!

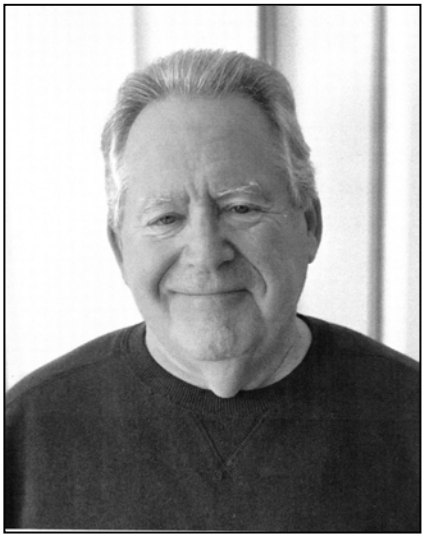
Starting on January 21, 2020, COVID-19 was all that was talked about and by March, the State of Connecticut was officially in a state of emergency with schools and public places closing. With social distancing orders in effect CAAO meetings and seminars were canceled; Shawna had to react! By April 14, 2020, the Executive Board approved the purchase of Zoom programming. The first Executive Board meeting via Zoom was held on June 2, 2020.

Even Assessor School was impacted. In an attempt to continue the longest running annual school in the country the decision was made to postpone Assessor School from May 30 to August 9, unfortunately due to Covid, school was ultimately cancelled. Additionally, the 2020 CAAO Spring meeting which was going to be the first Assessor/Collector joint meeting was also postponed in an attempt to hold the meeting, but this too would eventually be cancelled. In spite of Covid, everyone pulled together and got through it.

Shawna is very proud to be an Assessor and for the positions she holds on the State Commissions. Furthermore, she was honored to serve as CAAO President. Shawna remains an active member, committee Chair and serves on the Executive Board. If all goes as planned her term on the Board will outlast her employment as an Assessor as she plans on retiring from Cromwell in 2026 and dedicating more time to the family business and traveling.

Daniel J. Kenny

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on October 19, 2023, with Charles Agli, Charles Danna, Patricia Hedwall, Robert Musson, and Paul Slattery in attendance)



CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2021
CAAO Continuing Service Award 2007

Dan began his career in real estate and assessing from a more unusual position in the corporate world. From 1980 to 1983 he worked for PHH Home Equity in Danbury as a corporate relocation service provider. In this position he managed the appraisal and resale processes of single-family homes and established and managed appraisal and broker performance goals. During his career with the company, he traveled a great deal throughout the southern, mid-Atlantic, northeastern states and was relocated to Atlanta, Georgia for a period of time.

He worked with many companies, including Georgia Pacific, Glaxo Pharmaceuticals, and Westpoint Pepperrell Textiles, and in 1987, he was awarded as Home Equity Most Valuable Account Manager.

In 1989, Dan returned to Connecticut as Operation Manager, and later became a Geographic Resource Manager.

During his tenure with PHH, he inspected many properties and got to see the work of many appraisers and learned what was important in the process. So, when he left the company in 1993, he joined Cadre Group Appraisals doing residential appraisal work primarily in Northern Fairfield County.

In 1995, while doing appraisal in Redding, Joe Ferraro was moving from the assessor's position in Redding to Southbury. Joe suggested that he apply for the Redding position. He was not certified at the time. Certification was not yet mandated.[9] Dan received his certification in 2000. Joe became one of his mentors.

During his time in Redding, Dan started attending the assessor's school, going through the classes and has memories of networking with other assessors at UConn, NRAAO and Vision conferences. He also completed his first, full measuring and list revaluation with Lesher-Glendinning and John Valente.

By 2000, Dan began looking for a position that might be financially better for him. Linda Roig was leaving Weston and suggested that he apply. He stayed in Weston until 2003. During his

[9] For the grand list of October 1, 2000 and each grand list thereafter, each assessor or members of the board of assessors who signs the grand list shall be certified in accordance with the provisions of section § 12-55 & 12-40a

time there, he had a medical issue and began to be concerned about the commute. He felt that he had to try to get closer to home. Middlebury opened up and since it was the town that he grown up in, he applied.

Dan worked in Middlebury, under a board of assessors, from 2003 to 2011 completing the 2006 and 2011 revaluation

To keep the board informed of his activities, he instituted a system of voluntarily providing monthly assessment process and accomplishments/status/update reports. The outcome was much better knowledge of what the assessor does and improved working relationship. Those reports provided him with good task and management tracking. In 2012, the board was disbanded, and Dan became Middlebury's first single assessor. But the money again became an issue.

So, in 2013, Dan accepted the position of Deputy Assessor in Bridgeport. By 2016, operational changes were made by the incoming administration. Many people were let go. Dan was tagged as the acting assessor. It was like being back in the corporate world. His management tracking reporting system became important again.

The 2015 revaluation had been signed before Dan became acting assessor. The court cases (about 600 in the first year) and working with a city attorney and frequent trips to New Britain to State Superior Court were new for him.

Noted below is the cover memo and management report format that Dan used from 2016-2019. Under each bulleted category he provided monthly updates to the Finance Director on completed processes and next planned tasks.

Cover Memo to Finance Director

Assessor Monthly Operational Tracking/Priority Report

Attached is the assessor tracking/priority report.

It documents the important processes and initiatives necessary to complete and sign the Grand List prior to January 31.

In each category I have bolded and underlined the updates and comments that are added information and may require attention or action.

The report also assisted Dan to monitor the completion timely processing of assessment functions including reporting to CT OPM, timely grand list processing/completion tasks, and office efficiency initiatives that are required.

Continued next page

Monthly Operational Tracking Priority Report

Categories

- Grand List working year in progress – Real, personal, motor vehicle.
- Court cases updates.
- Maps reviewed/filed.
- Tax-exempt property and personal exemption maintenance.
- Compile and send the 10% assessments penalty billing.
- Supplemental Motor Vehicle List processing.
- Staffing --- Background --- plans.
- Software supplier review and or issues.
- Continuing Education, Re-certification, Staff training.
- Vacation schedule.
- Tax Assessor webpage updates.
- Meeting with zoning and building departments.
- Personal property audits.
- Board of Assessment Appeals.
- Current revaluation in process.
- Upcoming next revaluation -- planning.
- Reports completed/filed with CT OPM.
- Tax Bill Assessment Balancing with Tax Collector.
- Office Efficiencies Adopted.

By 2019, the long commute began to wear on Dan, so he took the assessors position in Oxford. He found that this position was not a good fit for him, so in 2020 he began as the assessor in Washington. He stayed in Washington until his retirement in August 2022.

Looking back on the changes over the years, Dan recalls going from the handwritten assessor's cards in Redding through using CAMA systems and truly believes that it is important to do the transition in CAMA systems before the actual revaluation work begins.

Dan served CAAO on several committees over the years including Election, By-Laws, PA 490 and Ethics Committee. He was the recipient of the CAAO Distinguished Service Award and the CAAO Continuing Service Award. In addition, he was President of the New Haven County Assessors Association in 2009 and 2010.

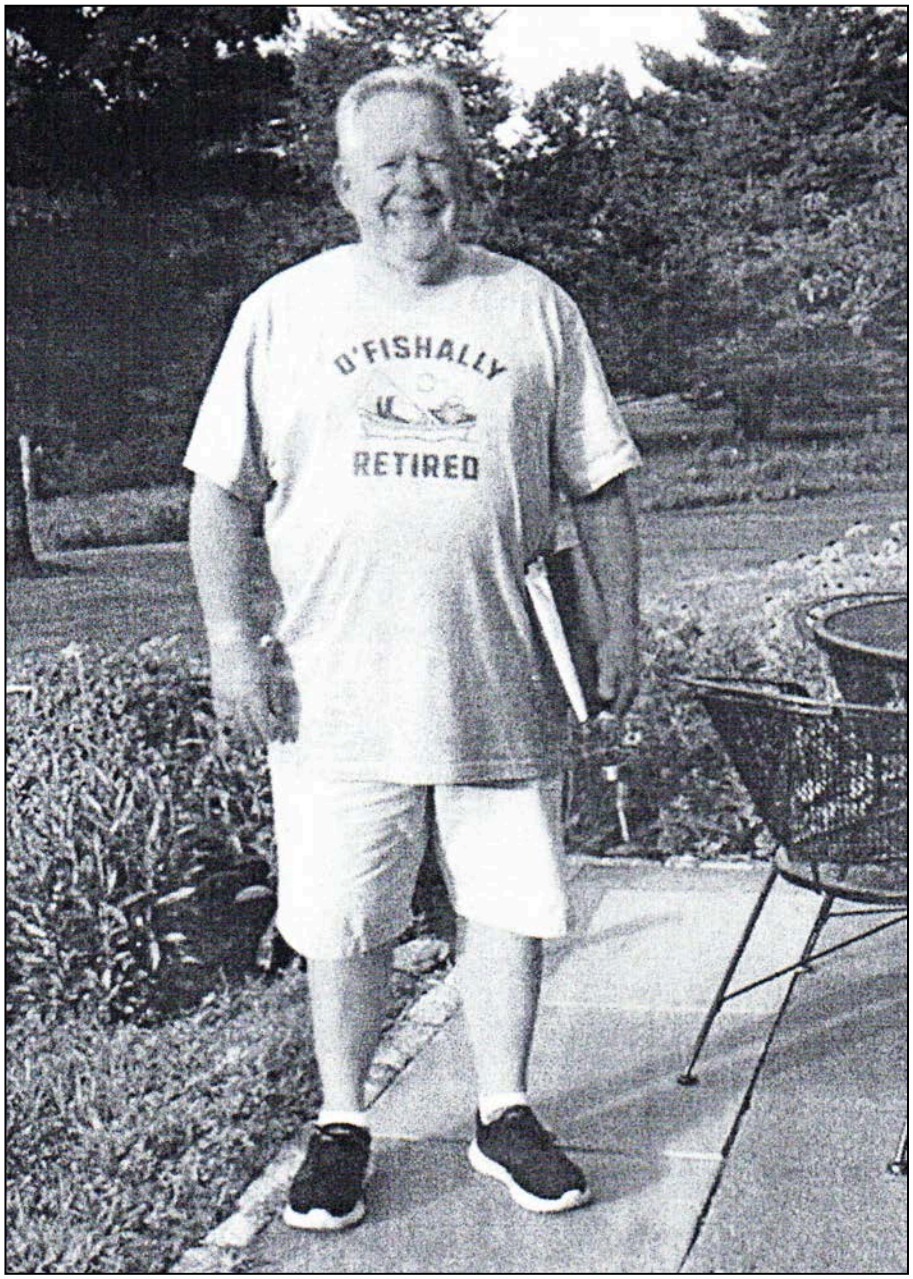
Dan describes the CAAO as a family that provides information and guidance as well as support for one another in the assessment profession. He especially thanks all of his instructors and all of the staff members that he worked with in his various communities.

Dan describes a very special memory that occurred on his last day of work. He dressed casually in his retirement tee shirt and shorts doing his final inspection of a newly constructed waterfront property. When he knocked on the door, the lady of the house invited him in and said that she would be with him shortly. Dan waited in the kitchen with her two young daughters. While talking, notice was taken of his tee shirt and questions were asked. The woman was really

interested in what he did and the process. When he got back to the office, he realized that he had been talking to a CNN news anchor.

When asked if he would do it again, his response was, “Definitely!!!”

Dan’s last day on the job doing field inspections



Helen Totz

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on March 16, 2023, with Charles Agli, Robert Musson and Patricia Hedwall in attendance.)

CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2006
CAAO Presidential Award 2004
CAAO Secretary 2006-2008

Helen started her assessment career in Waterbury as a CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) employee as a "floater". At that time, the office had a staff of 22 people, most of whom were civil servants with specific titles. There was no title that fit the concept of floater, so Helen got to do many different types of jobs wherever she was needed. These included mapping, personal property, exemptions and sketching. This was in the late seventies and Helen was a part of almost every department for eight years.

As a single mother of three little girls, Helen's goal was to become an appraiser. The income from that job would support her family.

We have all heard the stories about our fellow newbies receiving encouragement and support from fellow workers and employers, but Helen met with some of the misogyny that was common during that period. After eight years she was finally allowed to take the civil service exam to become a "clerk-typist". When an appraiser opening became available, she scored the highest on the Civil Service exam, but the position was not filled because those in charge felt it was a job appropriate only for a man. She also had to pay for her assessment classes out of pocket. So, she did! She took classes one and two with Chuck Sweeney in Litchfield. She learned of an opening for the Assistant Assessor in Cheshire.

Her interview committee consisted of Rick Wall and Jim Clynes, the assessor.

After about three years in Cheshire, Ed Clifford was the acting assessor in Hamden and approached Jim Clynes to take over the Hamden position. Jim wanted someone he could work with so Helen soon followed as deputy. This was in 1988. She was encouraged to take Course three and sit for the certification test in New Haven.

Over the years, Jim and Helen worked in Hamden and filled in as acting assessor and deputy in several towns including Seymour, Prospect and Oxford. In all, she worked in more towns than she can remember.

Helen passed on some insights when she was acting assessor. In each of the towns that Helen worked in as an acting assessor, they had Vision as their CAMA system and Quality Data as their administrative systems. There were only two towns where Helen needed some assistance. In those two towns, the office staff was able to train Helen in the quirks of their systems, along

with support from the vendors. They all were small towns with very few legal issues to deal with. When Helen needed to go to court, the matters were on residential properties.

Helen gives recognition to Larry LaBarbera for his assistance in helping her do the fieldwork on permits in several of the towns. Larry stepped in whenever Helen asked, even doing inspections in mid-January one year.

The most difficult tasks, according to Helen, were related to what the prior assessor(s) had undertaken or neglected to undertake. One town had the Senior Services office actually processing elderly homeowner applications, not just renter applications. Another did not find it necessary to keep any written record of prorations or certificates of correction despite the statutory mandate to do so. Another town allowed disabled veterans to receive their exemptions without having an honorable discharge on file; only the VA letter indicating the percentage of disability was taken. Many records were maintained incorrectly, each assessor doing it "the way it was always done" despite new statute changes.

Helen thinks that the increase over time from three CCMA classes to six now available, will bring in more thoroughly educated assessors. Helen stated that statutes have become so very complicated and change annually, so the new efforts the CCMA Committee is initiating should help everyone get on the same page.

Eventually the Hamden retirement system was going to be changed, and Helen wanted to move on to maintain benefits. She applied for the position of clerk in Hartford but was turned down because she didn't have a degree.

Helen was recruited as assessor in Suffield in 2008 and then went to East Windsor full time in 2018.

In 2004, Jim became the President of CAAO and Helen became the secretary. When Jim had a family emergency, Helen had to take over all the paperwork that goes with the president's position. Helen remained as secretary for many years.

Jim and Helen were also the moving forces of the CCMA Committee for many years. Helen went from committee secretary to becoming an eventual member of the committee. During their years, revaluation specifications and statutes were being rewritten and the divisions to CCMA I and CCMA II were being addressed.

Helen became an instructor and absolutely loved teaching, especially when we had our classes at UConn before the change in the venue on campus. She enjoyed sharing her knowledge of the profession and the history of the various statutes. As an instructor, she was also a member of the Education Committee for many years.

When describing the highlights of her career, Helen put her first year as secretary of New Haven County and instituting the USMC Toys for Tots toy collection during the Christmas meeting at the top of her list. This collection has become a tradition with NHCAA, along with inviting the Marines who pick up the donations and have lunch with the assessors.

The second is the CAAO collections at State meetings for Project Hometown Support, bringing the ability to support our troops after 9/11 to all the members.

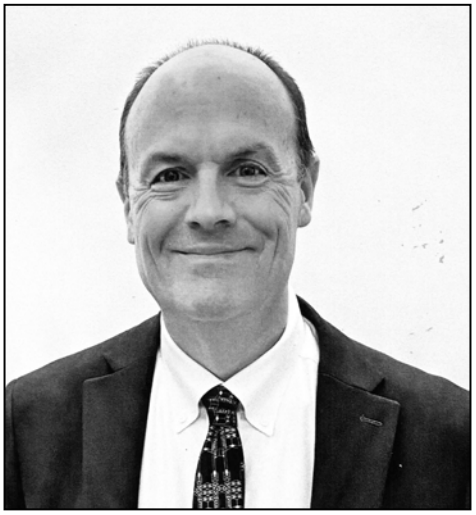
She was also responsible for the “Little Blue Membership Directory” books that we had before the internet became popular when she served as Chair of the Membership Committee. (Note: The last printed CAAO Membership Directory was printed in 2008. The directory was handed out at the 2008 CAAO Spring Meeting.)

Would she do it all again?

Definitely!

John Rainaldi

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall November 16, 2023, with Paul Slattery, Walter Kent, Charles Agli, Charles Danna, Dan Kenny, Robert Musson and Patricia Hedwall in attendance.)



CAAO President 2015-2016
CAAO Assessor of the Year Award 2016
CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2020
CAAO Presidents Award 2018 & 2022
NRAAO Sherry Vermilya Award 2016

John admits to not being a Connecticut native. He grew up in New Jersey and attended the University of Rhode Island where he earned a Bachelors in Finance. In the 1990s, the option for getting an MBA in real estate in the northeast were limited. He attended a degree program at UConn, earned his MBA in real estate and started working in appraisals.

He worked for the Jerry Adkins Co. from 1992 to 1994 and worked for TW Henry Real Estate Associates from 1994 to 1999. He was a Partner-Appraiser in the firm.

“One day in the summer of 1999, my wife Sandy and I returned home on a Saturday evening. We were in New York for a Yankee game. When we got our mail, there was a flyer in the mailbox that the Town of Manchester was looking for a Deputy Assessor. It had not been sent through the mail. I still have no idea who put it there or how it got there.

I read it over and thought it sounded like a good deal. Working with Tom Henry was great, and he taught me a lot. We had, and I still have, a great friendship, and the money was getting pretty good. But we worked in three states, and I drove almost 25,000 miles a year, in all sorts of weather conditions. And as a partner, healthcare was ridiculously expensive, and as a partner, I paid self-employment tax. The position in Manchester, where I lived, was less money gross, but it was more money net. It was 2.6 miles from home and the benefits were significantly better, so I applied.

I went to the oral panel and there were two assessors that I later got to know very well. Joan Paskewich and Joanne Ferraresso. I thought it went well, and the next day I got the call to come back for an interview with Joan Oros, the Director of Assessment and Collection and Alan Desmarais, the Finance Director. I got the job offer and started in October 1999. This means that I started in the field, not from the bottom, but from the high middle of the scale.

“Joan and Alan were very good to me and I owe them both a lot.”

While in Manchester, John earned not only his CCMA but also his CCMC.

In 2002, Joan left for New Fairfield, which was much closer to her home, and John was promoted to Director of Assessments and Collections.

"In late 2022, I was eligible to retire from Manchester after 23 years. For a variety of reasons, I started looking and I was hired by the Town of Ellington. I did not want to leave Manchester in a bad way so we worked out a plan where I could work in both towns part-time through January to complete both Grand Lists."

Early on in his time in Manchester, Joan Oros encouraged John to become involved with the Hartford Area Assessors Association and CAAO. He became Tom Caputi's HAAA vice president. Tom taught him to keep things "entertaining". Great advice!!!

After about a year, Tony Homicki told him, "I think you should be CAAO President someday". I thought, "Wow, really?" But a decade or so later (2014), it happened. In the meantime, John served on the Motor Vehicle, the Legislative, the Finance, the Membership and the Nominating Committees as well as being the CCMA Committee chair.

He was named the Assessor of the Year in 2016 and received the Presidential Award in 2018 and in 2022, the Distinguished Award in 2020 and the NRAAO Sherry Vermilya Award in 2016.

One of the most interesting cases that John had was the JC Penney personal property case. Manchester won the case at the trial court level and it went to the Connecticut Supreme Court. The issue centered on whether the appellant was allowed to submit a declaration and reserve the right to modify it later. They were told that they could submit an amended declaration by December 15th but they submitted an amendment many months later. Manchester rejected it as the Grand List was already signed by then. They went to the Board of Assessment Appeals and wanted their prior statement reserving the right to revise to allow them to do so. Many capable people worked on this case, and although it would have been easy to settle, it would have been wrong. So, we went to trial. The Supreme Court labeled the appellant's position as "chutzpah". The Court ruled 6-0 in our favor.

John expressed a fear that the subject of regionalization will continue to be pushed as a solution to the problem of finding assessment staff. But towns need local knowledge in the Assessor's Office. They need people who know the local market, know the people and pay attention to what is going on locally. We have seen examples where regionalization has not worked. With Water and Sewer, Health Districts and others. Assessment Office budgets are normally less than 1% of the Towns expenses. How much cheaper could regionalization make it and at what cost to the Grand List.

When asked if he would do it again… definitely.

John Chaponis, in his own words.

(Interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall May 17, 2023, with Charles Agli Jr., Walter Kent, Robert Munson, Marsha Standish and Paul Slattery in attendance. The interview has been edited to reflect the separation of John's biography and the related history of HB5950, in which John played the central role.)

CAAO Assessor of the Year 2008
CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2016
CAAO Presidents Award 2011 & 2018
CAAO President 2001
CAAO Legislative Committee
CAAO Special Recognition Award 2019

Municipal assessment is the only job that I have ever had. While I had various part-time jobs during high school and college, my first full time job was with the city of Jersey City in 1987.

My father was a real estate broker and, also owned three rental properties in West Hartford. I was always interested in real estate, but I knew that I didn't want to be working in sales. I started college as a math & accounting major and ended up shifting towards real estate appraisal.

While attending college, I met a girl who was from New Jersey, and her father was an MAI appraiser. He convinced me to change my career path from accounting to real estate appraisal. He told me about jobs that were opening in New Jersey and that the city of Jersey City was ordered to perform a 1988 city-wide revaluation; their first revaluation since 1970.

I was hired by the city of Jersey City, as an Assessment Aide, in March of 1987 by City Assessor Peter Casamasino. I was so excited to get the job that I never inquired as to what the salary would be. Prior to this, I was in college full time and selling furniture part-time, earning about $28,000 per year. I remember getting my first paycheck from Jersey City only to learn that my salary was $15,500 per year (about half of what I was making prior on a part time basis).

The good news was, we were in the middle of the first revaluation in the last 18 years and there were tons of overtime. I worked 3 nights per week and every Saturday in order to double my income that first year. As time went on, I continued taking real estate appraisal courses part-time at Rutgers University and eventually sat for the CTA (Certified Tax Assessor – NJ) exam in 1991. I passed and was promoted to the position of Deputy Assessor in 1991 and my salary had grown to $46,000 when I left in November of 1992.

While I loved Jersey City, I realized that I loved CT more and returned in November of 1992 to accept the position of Assessor for the Town of Colchester. While I was only a certified Assessor in NJ, I had already taken CCMA 1-A in June of 1991 and CCMA 1-B in June of 1992. The law requiring a Connecticut Assessor to have their CCMA passed in 1995, so State Certification was not required in 1992, but the town "preferred it". I think the fact that I was already certified in NJ and could sit for the Connecticut exam (with waivers for the appraisal classes) in the fall of 1993 made them willing to take a chance on me. My starting salary was $42,000 and would go up $2,000 once I was certified. I passed my CCMA Exam in the fall of 1993.

In the spring of 1994, as part of a budget cut, my Board of Finance was downsizing my office from 3 full time (including myself) to 2 full time employees. I told them that if they went forward with this, I would look for another job and they essentially challenged me to do that.

Three weeks later, I handed in my resignation and accepted the position of Assessor for the Town of Wilton at a salary of $65,000.

While I went to work for Wilton full time, I continued working for Colchester Thursday nights and Saturdays until they filled the position. After four months with the Town of Wilton, Colchester asked me to come back to work for them and offered to give me a third employee and increase my salary to $48,000. I chose to come back to Colchester in December of 1994. I purchased a piece of land in town, and built my current home in Colchester in 1995. I have continued living and working in Colchester ever since. My new goal is to beat Walter Lawrence's record of 37 years of service to one town (Peter Marsele's record is out of reach ☺).

Early in my career, having come from NJ assessing, and being less familiar with CT, I needed to develop a group of people that I could reach out to for guidance. NJ doesn't tax motor vehicles or personal property so I needed guidance. This was way before the internet, so I had an old school rolodex and added a bunch of assessors who seemed willing to help and I took turns calling them so that I never had to burden just one of them. Robert Musson, Walter Lawrence, and Jack Van Oudenhove sat on my CAAO oral interview panel in Colchester so I reached out to each of them first and asked it was ok to call if I had questions? I already had a connection with Frank Kirwin as he went to high school with my parents at Hartford High. Through state and county meetings, and Frank's introductions, I got to know Tony Homicki, James Ramos and especially Joan Paskewich. They were all a really big help in those early years. If it was a really tough issue, I saved those calls for Charlie Agli, and after his retirement, Steven Kosofsky. I would never have made it in this career if it were not for these colleagues who were always willing to give me some of their time. No one ever refused my requests for help, and I have tried to pay that forward.

Colchester is a wonderful town that has grown immensely since I began my career here. When I started there were 3,227 residential homes and a 490 million dollar grand list whereas today we have 5,501 residential homes and a 1.5 billion dollar grand list. We still have a lot of farms & horse properties and you will see just about everything when performing inspections.

I recall meeting a woman at her home in order to perform an inspection on a new barn. We had an appointment at 4 pm. I was waiting in her driveway with my Deputy Assessor, Chandler Rose, when she pulled in from work. She asked us to wait a few moments while she ran in the house and got out of her work clothes and asked us to meet her down by the barn. When she got down to us, she mentioned that her sow was pregnant and just had piglets last night. As we walked into the barn, she became frantic to see that the sow had rolled over in her sleep while she was nursing, and was laying on, and crushing, some of the piglets. She climbed over the fence and was trying to wake up the sow or move her and the mother was totally exhausted and wouldn't move. The sow must have weighted 350 pounds. and the woman couldn't get the piglets out, so I handed my clipboard to Chandler and jumped over the fence and I began pulling/lifting up on the mother pig as much as I could as the farmer kept pulling out baby piglet after baby piglet. Unfortunately, two of those babies did not live but we pulled out about 10-12 of them that did survive.

On the ride back to the office Chandler, who was a fairly new employee at the time, said "should I get used to stuff like this happening on a regular basis?" and I said "well, rescuing baby piglets is not a regular occurrence; but you will get used to the smell".

Tony Homicki was CAAO president in 1993 and put me on the Legislative Committee thinking it might be nice to hear how New Jersey did things in comparison to Connecticut. Of course, I jumped on this opportunity to begin talking about the fact that we have no job security. During this same time, I started an "Administrators Union" in Colchester, and we put our Assessor, Town Engineer, Finance Director, Social Services Director, Park & Recreation Director, Librarian, Senior Center Director, and Youth Services Director all into a union that stated that no one could be disciplined unless the employer had "just cause".

"Just cause" are not merely two words, but rather are short for "the seven tests for just cause" which are a very well-defined test created in 1964 by then arbitrator Carrol Daugherty. While this personally gave me the job security that I felt I needed to be able perform the fair administration of the local property tax "without fear of repercussion", I still wanted to fix the problem in Connecticut. I was hearing stories about colleagues of mine being told to "lower all these assessments on my biggest campaign contributors by 20% or you are fired".

Over time, it turned into an obsession that I couldn't seem to let go of. When I became CAAO President in 2001, it was my goal to see something get done. I pushed our Legislative Committee Chairs to make this their number one priority in 2001 but we couldn't seem to get anything going at the Capitol.

In 2008, I went to my own personal state representative and had a bill raised. While it didn't go far, it was a start. In 2009, I asked the CAAO Executive Board to increase our "legislative monitoring" contract to a "lobbying" contract so that a professional firm could assist in lobbying on our behalf. The Executive Board agreed and put some funding behind our effort. However, in 2009, we did not even get a bill raised.

That brings us to 2010. I asked the Executive Board if the Legislative Committee allow me to represent CAAO on just this one issue (rather than getting a bill raised as just an individual). Figuring there was nothing to lose, the Executive Board agreed and voted to allow me to take on this charge. 2010 CAAO President David Dietsch pulled me aside after the meeting and offered to come along on any/all meetings and wanted to help in any way possible.

Dave Dietsch has become one of my very good friends, but it all began back in 2010. Dave and I went to my state representative and brought back my old bill as HB 5059 An Act Concerning the Appointment of Municipal Assessors (2/8/2010). This bill repealed CGS 9-198 (terms of office for assessors) and removed the ability to "elect" Assessors. It also removed "Assessors" from 9-185 (municipal officers) who had a "term of office" pursuant to 9-187.

It gets called for a vote HB 5059 passed the House Floor unanimously on 4/21/2010. We were pretty much at the Capitol every day for the next three weeks trying to get it called for a vote in the Senate and it finally happened and passed the Senate on 5/4/2010, and was signed by the Governor on 5/26/2010.

Now comes the sad part.

Seven years later, in PA 17-2, in the dreaded "budget implementer", buried in Section 82 (out of 732 sections) someone slipped in the words: "*Notwithstanding the provisions of any special act,*

Municipal charter or ordinance". Which basically says "local charter or ordinance," now rule again. In other words, if the local ordinance or charter says you "have a term of office", it was now back to being allowable. Some towns were lucky in that they went through Charter revision after 2010 and before 2017 and they showed the town leaders the law change and those towns removed "terms of office" from their Charter. Colchester and Branford are two that I am aware of who revised their Charters to remove a "term" of office and need for a reappointment.

After Serving as the CAAO Legislative Chair for the prior ten years, I have developed relationships where I receive phone calls, or emails, from certain lawmakers saying, "we are hearing that there are not enough certified Assessors in CT to fill the vacancies". They question if the requirement for Assessor to be certified should remain in place? The truth was that the municipalities struggling to fill their posts were either not offering a competitive salary or were viewed as an employer who had not treated the prior staff fairly.

Assessors need to be able to act freely and independent of any oversight on "valuation and exemption issues". The law empowers only the assessor to make these determinations and specifically states that only the Board of Assessment Appeals or superior court can override an assessment determination. However, if you allow an elected politician to appoint absolutely anyone, coupled with the ability to remove them easily, I believe fair taxation on the local level would be in jeopardy.

As I get closer to retirement, it is time for someone else to pick up this torch and keep this battle alive.

Municipal assessment is truly the only job that I have ever had and reflecting back on my career, I have no regrets. I have loved this job and it has been very good to me and my family. The most rewarding part has been hiring eight different employees with little to no assessment experience and watching them go on to become Assessors in other municipalities.

Someone took a chance on me and gave me a start in Jersey City and I have enjoyed being able to pay that forward and change the lives of others for the better as well.

Michael Milici

(The interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on June 22, 2023, with Patricia Hedwall, Walter Kent and Paul Slattery in attendance.)

Mike admits that he got started in the assessment field purely by accident. He has just accepted a job as a sales representative and was ready to start when he got a call from his mother. Mom was involved in the political scene in West Haven and had received a call from a town father stating that he needed a college graduate for the position of deputy assessor.

After explaining the situation to his soon-to-be employer, Mike accepted the Deputy Assessor position in March of 1986. He started the certification process while working under Assessor Tom Roche.

The day that Mike became certified, Assessor Tom Roche passed away, Mike then became the assessor in 1989.

Mike was very active in the union from the beginning. After about a year, union problems caused him to be dismissed from his position. He fought this and went to the State Supreme Court in 1989. By this time, he had already been hired as Assessor of East Haven,

While in East Haven, he took on the first CAMA revaluation working with Lesher-Glendinning. The atmosphere was very political and included a reclassification of union positions and separating supervisors and clerical positions.

Due to political pressure, Mike spent many years with revaluation problems. Due to rising values, the 2004 revaluation was at first postponed, then tossed.

The 2006 revaluation found values even higher and by 2011, a vast amount of storm damage caused even more extra work.

One major court case was the Farm River Rock Quarry property (2015) where the manufacturing exemption had been denied.

In 2012 Mike was elected president of the Society of Professional Assessors (SPA) after having served as both secretary and vice president. Mike has continued as an active member of the SPA to this day. He strongly supports the association and its outstanding educational programs.

Over the years, Mike has worked contractually in many towns including Hamden, Haddam, New Haven, Branford and a total of 31 years in East Haven.

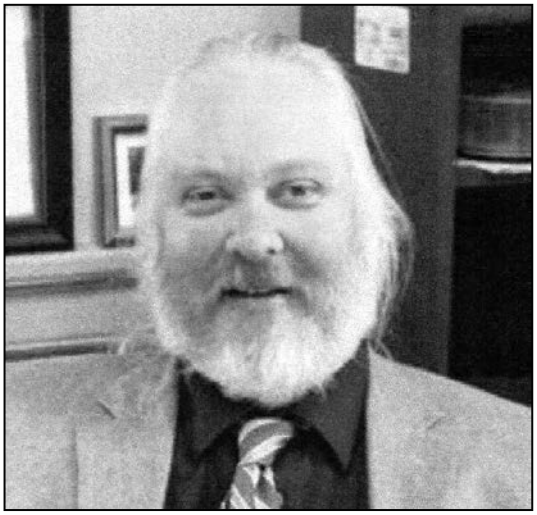
Two years ago, he started doing consulting work on the side. He is currently working in Hamden catching up on past permits (there are over 16,000 open permits) and reviewing exempt properties in preparation for the 2024 revaluation.

Since he still has a teenager at home, Mike has no plans for retirement in the near future.

When asked if he would do it again, he replied, “Absolutely!” He believes in always approaching the work as if it was his first day. But it does always seem to be a politically charged situation.

John S. Philip

(The interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on March 21, 2024. In attendance were Charles Agli, Charles Danna, Dan Kenny, Walter Kent, Robert Musson, Paul Slattery, Brian Smith and Marsha Standish.)



John said that he deliberately tried to avoid this line of work. John's father, Henry "Hank" Philip, was a long time mass appraiser and assessor. John's mother was in the business too. John noted that in high school he did not enjoy math, but liked to write. After high school, he studied journalism and began working as a reporter for a couple of years. As a young man beginning his career path, he really didn't enjoy reporting. It was becoming clear that he did not want to make a career out of it. In 1988, while still working as a reporter, the Windham revaluation kind of blew up. Although it was not his beat at the time, he ended up covering the story. As a result, John became interested in that line of work. He felt it was more interesting than reporting news stories.

Not long after covering the Windham revaluation story, John took a job with Cole-Layer-Trumble Company as a residential data collector. His first training period with the revaluation company was in East Hampton on a road he now frequents as it is close to his house. In 1990, he had his first assignment, which was with the Town of Durham. At the time, John's father was the town assessor. John ended up working for Cole-Layer-Trumble for ten years. He enjoyed the job, but not the traveling.

In the back of his mind, he always thought about becoming an assessor. The notion of going to the same place day after day was something he was not interested in. But one too many phone calls on Friday night directing him to be in Pennsylvania on Monday morning or be in New Hampshire Monday morning, weekends became one long errands.

In December 1999, an assessing job became open in the town of Groton. John felt there was a lot happening there. If he was going to work somewhere everyday, the town of Groton would be the place. He applied and was offered the job. He enjoyed working in the town very much as he stated, "It's a beautiful town." While serving as a town assessor he took part in two and a half revaluations. The town of Groton has a unique set up with the fire districts. There are nine independent fire districts, each with their own mill rate. John served as the Groton assessor from 2000 to 2011.

Along the way, John's father wanted to step down as the assessor of Durham and wanted John to apply for the position. John's first reply was, "Dad, I want my Saturdays. What would I want to do that for?" John eventually applied for the position and ended up taking the job in 2003. While serving as an assessor in Durham, he completed four revaluations. He has continued to be the assessor in the town of Durham over the past 21 years.

After about eight years working in Groton, John became bored. In 2011, John saw that Larry LaBarbera was retiring as assessor in Hartford, so he applied for the job. John ended up getting the position as head assessor. John said that he wakes up every morning and he can't believe that he ended up being the assessor for the City of Hartford. He said that Hartford is a great city and he enjoys the work. At one time, John's father, Hank, had worked in Hartford as the chief assessment technician for real estate too. He was asked if anyone in the city knew the connection between John and his father. John said they had no idea they were related.

John tells the story of when he was going through a vault in his office. He came upon a pile of folders that contained sketches that his father had done of many of the downtown properties. John saved the folders. He stated, "People just don't do that kind of work anymore."

Charlie Agli, a member of the Research/Historian Committee, recalls that a number of years ago he was serving on an interview panel for a position in the Hartford assessors' office that John's father was applying for. Back then the candidates being interviewed had a number rather than being identified by their name. The interview panel used a script of questions they would ask. They could only ask the exact question, and could not use the person's name. It was a very sterile process. The interview panel then had to give a grade for each applicant. They went strictly by the person's number. Charlie was surprised about how John applied for the Hartford assessor's position. No one on the interviewing panel ever put all of the pieces together that John was Hank's son.

One of the things John likes about working as an assessor in Hartford is that house taxes are not an issue. The city protects the houses from revaluations with special legislation just for the City of Hartford. The special legislation is Connecticut General Statute §12-62R.[10] Under the program, residential properties that include one, two, and three family dwellings plus condominiums are assessed at 36.75 percent of fair market value with a mill rate of 36.20. Hartford's current mill rate for commercial and industrial property is 68.95 mills at 70% of market value. This formula has to be calculated every year based upon the CPI index plus other factors. The rate has stayed the same for the last two years.

The background of legislation in Hartford to protect residential homeowners from revaluation shifts goes back many years. The first legislation to protect homeowners was similar to what exists in Hartford today, except the ratio was not calculated every year. The law was sunsetted in the late 1980s before the 1989 revaluation. John stated that the 1989 revaluation was extremely disruptive with some 1,200-court cases. That is when the city decided to create a permanent law protection for the houses. At that time, it was handled with what they called a surcharge on commercial real estate and personal property. As you can imagine, the program was hated in the business community. By the time it ended, it was like a two to one relationship between what commercial taxpayer paid and what residential taxpayers paid. The law survived until the 2006 revaluation. As a result, the city of Hartford decided to phase out the surcharge over a five-year period. It was during the 2011 revaluation implementation that the current preferential ratio

[10] The legislation was adopted July 13, 2011 pursuant to Public Act 11-212 "An Act Concerning the Municipal Option to Adopt Assessment Rates Limiting Property Tax Increases on Residential Properties."

program went into effect. They wanted to hold the revaluation shift for houses to three percent. As it worked out, houses were held to a two percent increase for that year.

In 2011, when John first began working in Hartford, the city changed the law again and that's what they are working with now. During that year, John had to manually make the three percent calculation for the last time. Currently it is on autopilot. With the 2011 revaluation, the assessment ratio on residential property was 29.6 percent, and today, eleven years later the ratio is now 36.75.

There followed a general discussion on Hartford's real estate market and revaluations. John gives former Mayor Luke Bronin a lot of credit for not putting off the 2021 revaluation. He was under a lot pressure to postpone the revaluation to 2023. The tax burden would have been much worse if such a postponement occurred. The average house tax went up about 25 percent and the average three family house tax went up about 40 percent. Sales today are 40 percent higher than they were in 2021, which is astounding to John. That's what is happening. What once happened in ten years with increasing values is happening now in just five years. Today, a 1,000 square foot ranch style house in the Blue Hills section of Hartford is selling in the high $200,000 range whereas in 2016 it would barely sell for $100,000. John said that the six family houses that he is currently in court defending at $350,000, are now selling between $600,000 and $750,000. Hartford is already in the midst of foreclosures on some of these properties with apartments not too far behind. He also stated that rents have gone up too, but not enough to support mortgages and taxes especially in the older stock of housing.

John said that there are a lot of things he finds interesting about the city of Hartford. One is the steady wave of immigration. People that formerly occupied certain areas in Hartford have moved out to other towns including Wethersfield and Rocky Hill. They are now being replaced by a number of eastern Europeans.

The following is an interesting story about getting rid of old files from by-gone days. I am sure we all have been confronted with this situation. There was a fourth floor in city hall that is no longer used due to fire codes requirements. This is where a lot of unused furniture goes to die. Everyone wanted to clean it out. In this room was a "Thing" that looked like an apothecary. It had a lot of small drawers filled with title cards. John said that he had no idea what they were. It was never updated during his time as assessor. When there was a threat to clean out the fourth floor everybody assumed that the file belonged to the assessor's office. Therefore, they felt it was their responsibility to get rid of. John explained how it was not his. He asked around but to no avail. He kept a few of the files in his office and when old timers came in to visit he would ask them if they were familiar with the documents. Former Harford Assessor John McDermott was one of them. He also asked Ned Heberger if he knew about the files. John asked a few people that had been around for a while. Nobody knew what the files were. Then one day city Corporation Counsel attorney Mike Collins walked into John's office. He said, "Don't throw those out." They apparently belonged to the city engineer who had compiled the best title records for decades. The bottom line, they ended up getting dumped.

John said they recently scanned four sets of old property record cards at a cost of about $100,000. One of the sets included the 1978 revaluation in which they sent people around the

city taking pictures of houses. They have the camera; it's an old Polaroid that weights about three pounds. When they used the Polaroid camera, they sent two people around to take the pictures of the properties. One person held up a sign in front of the property with the map-block-lot number written on it. The other person took the picture. They also have another camera, John doesn't know the brand, but it's circa World War II.

John said that they still have the 1978 property record cards but they are in pretty tough shape. These cards are still referred to very frequently by environment consultants and other professionals that need the cards. The cards are all penciled; they have been here for almost 50 years. Today, all of the cards are in a GIS viewer. You can see everything.

The first set of property record cards for the city of Hartford goes back to 1963. The revaluation back then was done by the PRC Jacobs Company. John said that he still has those cards. They were small cards, approximately 5 X 7. Hartford's first CAMA revaluation was done in 1989.

Hartford's next revaluation will be in 2026. The big concern is the value shifts and its effect on the various classes of property. One of the possibilities is a phase-in. At the present time, commercial real estate and residential estate are roughly even. The top 10 taxpayers are 20 percent of the Hartford grand list. They went down in 2012. It's unknown what is going to happen in 2026. Hartford's exempt property represents about 50 percent of the grand list. There are some office properties that are currently in foreclosure. Apartments are still going up in value.

Another interesting scenario has to do with the conversion of apartments to condominiums. Beginning in 2011 one of the developers in Hartford started converting his apartment building into condominiums. In doing so he gets the residential assessment ratio, even though he is not going to sell the units. They are bought, sold and managed as apartments. They look like apartments, but on paper they are condominiums. As a result, their tax bill is cut in half. People started to catch on and it became known as the condo loophole. Once upon a time Hartford had some 1,800 apartments and 2,500 condominiums. Today, Hartford has 7,500 condominiums and 1,100 apartments. In 2014, they changed the law to put a stop to that. What they left in place was the opportunity to achieve that tax saving as condominiums for anybody that buys an apartment building and within three years puts 35 percent or more of their purchase price into improving it. Where they used to have ten or twelve or fifteen a year, now they have one or two. Since 2011 they have had two or three that have declassified as condominiums.

John's involvement in CAAO includes being on the Revaluation Committee for years and the Legislative Committee. When asked if he would become an assessor again, he said that he would.

Lawrence G. LaBarbera

(The interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on April 18, 2024. In attendance were Charles Agli, Jr., Charles Danna, Daniel Kenny, Walter Kent, Robert Musson and Paul Slattery.)

CAAO Treasurer 2002 to 2024
CAAO Webmaster 2001 to 2024
CAAO Assessor of the Year 2002
CAAO Continuing Service Award 2006
CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2010
NRAAO Sherry Vermilya Award 2016
CAAO Continuing Service Award 2016
CAAO Special Recognition Award 2020
CAAO Distinguished Service Award 2023
CAAO Presidential Award 2023

Lawrence LaBarbera graduated from the State University of New York at Delhi in 1972 with an Associate in Applied Science degree in Construction Technology. Upon graduation he applied to several large construction companies in the New England/New York area. None of them were hiring at the time. After spending most of the summer looking for a job, Larry applied to a revaluation company, Cole Layer Trumble Company (now Tyler Technologies). They were doing a revaluation in his home county of Chautauqua, New York.

Larry was hired on August 2nd, 1972, as a data collector for one hundred dollars per week and two dollars per day as a travel allowance. The person who was assigned to teach him to be a data collector was his former high school world history teacher who was working on the revaluation for the summer. Together, on the first day, they measured and listed about 30 cottages in a small lakeside community on the shores of Lake Erie. All the work, including the calculations, was done manually and the measurements were from scratch using a 10-foot pole. Larry doesn't really remember much about his tenth grade world history class, but fifty-two years later, he vividly remembers that first day and is still in a profession that he enjoys doing every day.

After working in Chautauqua County for a few months he was transferred to Massachusetts to data collect houses in the town of South Hadley. This turned out to be the path of his life for the next several years. Cole Layer Trumble Company (CLT) was a national revaluation company and that meant there were work opportunities all over the country. Between 1972 and 1981 Larry moved multiple times and worked, in addition to Massachusetts, in New Jersey, Ohio, Kentucky, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, Vermont, New York, including Long Island, Westchester, Cortland and Saratoga Counties, and finally in the spring of 1981 was transferred back to Massachusetts to be the Commercial/Industrial Supervisor for the revaluation of the City of Springfield. After the Springfield project was completed in 1983, he worked for the next ten years managing several revaluations in the New England region, mostly working in Massachusetts and Connecticut. His first project supervisor assignment was South Windsor, Connecticut. Then, throughout the rest of the 1980s, he worked on revaluations in at least 15 different towns/cities in the region.

One exception to this was the project in Rochester, New York (1983-84) as the

Commercial/Industrial Supervisor where he gained a tremendous amount of experience valuing large commercial and industrial properties. The revaluation company leased an apartment for the staff, and he spent the next two years commuting back and forth to Springfield every other weekend. This was definitely not conducive to a happy family life, which included a wife and two young children, so he was relieved to complete this project and be assigned work back in New England.

However, his days of traveling were not completely over. In 1984 he was assigned as the Commercial Industrial Supervisor for the Harris County (Houston, Texas) revaluation project for three months to cover for the current supervisor who was on a leave of absence. Larry also has a special memory of the work in Kansas in 1986. CLT was contracted to supply the State of Kansas with a new appraisal system and it was his task to run the initial training classes for the commercial valuation module. The very first class was held in Shawnee and included the supervisors and managers of the State Department of Revenue. Larry was introduced as an expert appraiser with full knowledge of the new software. The first evening after class, the Shawnee appraisal staff invited Larry out to dinner to introduce him to several of the other managers. They brought him out to dinner at a nice restaurant, which they said was “the oldest building in town”. It was built in 1890. He didn’t have the heart to tell them that 1890 was practically new in many parts of New England.

One of the more notable projects Larry managed in Connecticut was the 1989 revaluation of the City of Hartford. This was a revaluation that took place after a major increase in market values had happened in the late 1980’s. The values were assigned in the summer of 1989 and by the time the notices were mailed in the fall there were hints of a market downturn. He worked with the Assessor, Robert Hartzell, to adjust the values downward to reflect the current state of the market. However, that adjustment still wasn’t viewed as sufficient by numerous taxpayers. There were several hundred tax appeals that lingered in the courts for many years. Depending on who you talked to (taxpayers or the City) the market downturn happened in the summer of 1989 or early 1990 after the effective date of the revaluation. Either way, many of the tax appeals were eventually settled and only a few resulted in full blown court trials.

One specific revaluation assignment that became important to Larry was Westhampton, Massachusetts. This project began with an evening visit to the town during a snowstorm. Sherry Vermilya, who founded United Appraisal Company, was now working for CLT due to his company being bought out. He and Larry made a proposal during the visit to the town for a full revaluation and conversion of the existing data for the 1985 revaluation. On the drive home, Larry skidded off the steep road, drove through someone’s front yard and then successfully steered back onto the paved road. No harm, no foul. However, to this day, when he drives that road, he cannot see any area where he wouldn’t have hit a tree or driven over a ditch. Someone was watching out for him. Ultimately, CLT got the project and Larry became the project supervisor. Once the project was completed, Larry continued work in the town by doing annual inspections for building permits, first for CLT and later as a private consultant. As of 2023, Larry had measured and listed every new house in town for nearly 40 years and done over ten revaluations.

While working in Hartford and Rocky Hill in 1989, CLT again requested that Larry travel out of state for a few other assignments. He went to Richmond, Virginia, Butler County, Kansas and Tulsa, Oklahoma, all for Commercial Data Collection Instruction and/or Income model creation.

The revaluation experience in Hartford was very beneficial for Larry both professionally and personally. In the summer of 1993, due to personal reasons including the fact that he had school age children, he decided that he no longer wanted to work in the revaluation profession which required frequent travel and/or moves. The position of Assistant Assessor for the City of Hartford became available due to an early retirement program offered by the city. He applied and was hired on December 12, 1993 mostly due to his extensive commercial/industrial experience and the recently completed city revaluation. It also may not have hurt that Bob Hartzell was his Area Manager at CLT for several years in the 1980s before he became the Hartford City Assessor. This position started Larry's career in various assessors' offices that has now lasted over thirty years.

During his time in Hartford, Larry worked on four additional revaluations, 1999, 2003, 2008 and 2011. Also, during his tenure, Larry was instrumental in implementing a new local option state statute (12-62d) that allowed the city to grant tax relief to residential property and apply a surcharge to commercial properties. That statute was repealed in 2006 and replaced with 12-62n which allows the use different assessment ratios based upon property class.

He mentioned Bob Hartzell a couple of times. Just mentioning him doesn't do him justice. He was one of the most influential assessors that Larry has ever worked with or for. His views on value and assessing were invaluable to Larry both in his CLT days and in Hartford. Bob had an excellent breadth of knowledge and ability to deal with the public and the town/city officials. He taught Larry both of those abilities. Many times, Larry has thought to himself "What would Bob do in this situation". The answer to that question has guided his actions and decisions over the years.

While in Hartford, in 1995, Larry joined the CAAO. His first committee assignment was the Revaluation Committee. A perfect fit based on his previous employment history. He also began taking classes to attain his CCMA designation. Due to the fact that Larry had taken several IAAO courses over the last few years, he received waivers for Course IIA, IIB & III. At the Fall Meeting in 1996 he was officially awarded the CCMA designation.

He became a member of the Information Technology Committee in 1999 which led him to take over as webmaster beginning in 2001; a position which he still holds today. Several iterations of the website have occurred mostly due to changing technology and availability of software. The website itself is self-supporting due to the generosity of the vendors that advertise their products and expertise. The Assessment Calendar, the Town Directory and the upcoming Events section are a must read for everyone in the assessment profession. A "Member's Only" section was added to the website in 2008. This section contains important Assessment Documents, Assessment Forms, By-laws, Assessor and Board of Appeals Handbooks, Committee Lists, links to all Executive Board and Committee Minutes, annual Education session downloads and Assessor Salary Surveys. It also contains every issue of the *Assessoreporter* beginning with the January 2007 issue. Links to the County Associations' web-pages including meeting minutes can also be found there. Larry gives his wholehearted thanks to Jane Grigsby for having the foresight to begin the website in November 1998.

Every CAAO member has received numerous e-mails from Larry in the form of a Hotline or Infoline. These have become a major source of information about education offerings, member events and CAAO meeting announcements. The Message Board is a more recent addition and provides direct contact from member to member with assessment questions and items of

interest to all.

Besides being the Webmaster, Larry is the CAAO Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee; positions he has held since the fall of 2002. In the 21+ years of being Treasurer, Larry has managed nearly 3.5 million in income & expenses, filed IRS tax returns and set annual budgets that have proved accurate and consistent. Each year the Finance Committee audits the records and gives him high marks for his excellent bookkeeping.

In 2003, with the retirement of Bob, Larry was promoted to Hartford City Assessor. In addition, for a short period of time, he was the Director of the combined Department of Assessment and Collections. It was during that time that Larry was certified as a Connecticut Municipal Collector (CCMC), a designation he still holds. A new Finance Director decided to move the offices back to independent offices.

In late 2010, during preparation for Larry's fourth revaluation in Hartford, (fifth if you count the one completed in 1989 while working for CLT) the city proposed an early retirement incentive in order to facilitate city-wide budget reform that was greatly needed. Larry opted to take part in the program. He put in his request to retire as of December 31st, 2010. However, due to the upcoming 2011 revaluation, the Mayor "requested" that Larry delay his retirement until June 30th, 2011. That summer, with the revaluation underway and a new assessor hired, Larry officially retired from Hartford after 17 years.

However, "retirement" was in name only and very short lived. Five days later, on July 5th, 2011, Larry became the Assessor for the town of Windsor, replacing long-time Assessor (24 years) Steven Kosofsky. The biggest challenge in Windsor was the size of the staff. In Hartford, there were people assigned to each separate function, clerical, motor vehicle, real and personal property. In Windsor there was only one part-time clerk and an Assistant Assessor. Late in his career, he found himself answering questions from the public about motor vehicles, exemptions, etc. Nothing that other Assessors weren't already doing but something that he had done only infrequently due to working in a larger office. He also had to deal with the third year of a phase-in from the 2008 revaluation and begin the process of bidding for the October 1, 2013 revaluation. That revaluation ultimately went very smoothly since most values were decreasing from the 2008 highs.

Throughout his time in Windsor, Larry performed three revaluations. All were performed "in-house" with some assistance for the residential portions mostly due to time constraints. The 2023 project was a model for the way many current revaluations are completed. It was a hybrid version. The town did the commercial/industrial/apartments and condominiums while the residential was contracted out to a revaluation company. Technology led the way in all phases. The database was placed on the "Cloud" so everyone could work on the same file. Nearmap was used to verify and "inspect" the exterior of all property. In addition, following OPM requirements, a physical field review was conducted for all properties. The final results were well within the required limits and even though the residential values increased dramatically, informal and Board of Assessment Appeals hearings were a very small percentage.

One additional function that Larry performed that he had never spent much time on was personal property valuations. In Hartford there were very highly skilled PP appraisers during Larry's time there (Joseph Dakers & Gail Gantick). He never had to concern himself with the day to day details of that part of assessing. The first year he worked on the personal property grand list, he made frequent calls to several of the personal property experts within CAAO. The

aforementioned, Dakers and Gantick as well as Lawrence LeBel, Chuck Feldman, Brian Smith, Melissa Bonin, Mary Gardner and various other members of the Personal Property Committee. That is one of the best parts of the organization. The ability of, and the willingness of, our members to assist one another.

Windsor has a very diverse tax base. Due to its location near Bradley International Airport, it was fast becoming a major hub for warehouse distribution facilities, especially Amazon. In 2014 Amazon built their first distribution center of just over 1 million square feet. Then in 2020-21, during the pandemic, a second facility of 3.8 million square feet was completed. The first facility had nearly 100 million in personal property installed initially. After one year in operation, they determined that the original concept they had was not working. They spent another 100 million refitting the facility with new machinery and equipment. All in all, Windsor's personal property grand list is approximately 15% of the total and Amazon pays nearly 10% of the total taxes.

As of January 31st, 2023, Larry officially retired from the town of Windsor. However, he was under contract for 2023 to complete the October 1, 2023 revaluation and for 2024 to assist in the transition to a new assessor or with any tax appeals.

Larry's assessment career has not just been Hartford and Windsor. He has been an elected member of the Board of Assessors in his hometown of Wilbraham, Massachusetts since 2002 and will be running for re-election in May 2024. The three member Board oversees all the functions with monthly meetings and the hiring of a Principal Assessor who manages the day-to-day functions and performs in-house revaluations every three years. Larry has run unopposed every term except the first.

In addition to the Board, he is fully certified as a Revaluation Company and has a thriving consulting business for Commercial/Industrial revaluations as well as doing building permit work in several municipalities in Connecticut and Massachusetts. He has worked in Bolton, Coventry, East Windsor, Granby, Suffield, Willington, Windham & Windsor Locks, Connecticut. In Massachusetts he has worked in Chicopee, Northampton & Westhampton.

Larry is an active member of the Northeastern Regional Association of Assessing Officers (NRAAO) and is currently the Treasurer. He was on the conference committee when it was held in Connecticut and has attended nearly every conference for over 20 years. He has also been a member of the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) since 1983.

Overall, Larry says that this "accidental" profession is one that he did not consider upon graduation from college, but he can't think of one that he is more suited for. In fact, the highest grade he ever got in college was for his real estate economics class (he got an A).

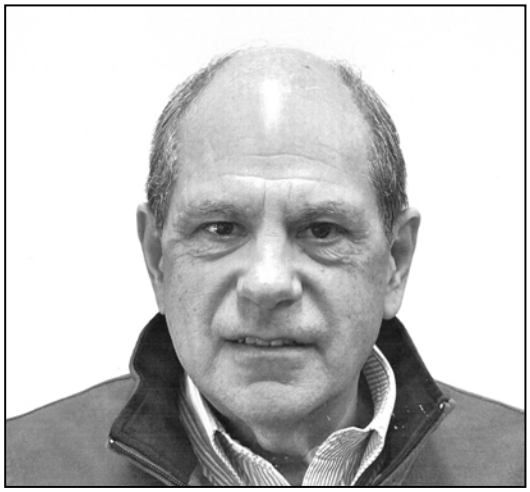
Additional Professional Designations of Lawrence LaBarbera

Senior Member of the American Society of Appraisers (ASA)**,** Certified Connecticut Municipal Collector (CCMC)**,** Certified Maine Assessor (CMA)**,** State of Connecticut Revaluation Supervisor & Commercial/Industrial**,** State of Connecticut Certified Revaluation Company.

At the end of the interview the Committee expressed a positive view of Larry's involvement in CAAO and that his organization and communication has been outstanding. Larry will again be running for CAAO Treasure this year, a position he has held for 25 years. Larry said that he couldn't think of a profession that he would be happier in than assessing.

Harry DerAsadourian

(The interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on September 19, 2024, with Charles Danna, Walter Kent, and Paul Slattery in attendance.)



Harry DerAsadourian is currently the assessor of Avon, Connecticut, a position he has held for the past 39 years. He was 28 years old when he was hired. His feeling about Avon is that he has had a good career in a nice town. Harry also has affiliation with the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers.

Harry's career has been entirely related to Real Estate. Before becoming an assessor, he worked for United Appraisal which later became Cole-Layer-Trumble Company. At the time, Jerry Nansteel was the project manager in the Wallingford revaluation project, and Hank Philip interviewed and hired him for the Wallingford project. When Cole-Layer-Trumble was awarded the revaluation job in Springfield in the early 1980's, they sent a crew from Connecticut to start the listings, Harry participated in this revaluation. Gradually he worked his way up until he became a project supervisor. Later, he went to work on Martha's Vineyard. While working in Martha's Vineyard, he worked closely with Sherry Vermilya, who was the owner of United Appraisal. When it became Cole-Layer-Trumbell, Sherry Vermilya was the Vice President of the New England region. Harry had a lot of respect for Sherry Vermilya and that association continued to influence Harry's work.

When Harry was working on the revaluation job in Vernon, Harry did about seventy-five percent of the town's valuations and oversaw the hearings. Jack Van Oudenhove was the assessor of Vernon and Tony Homicki was the assistant assessor. In 1983, Tony became the assessor in Enfield. As a result of the movement in jobs, Harry applied for Tony's position as assistant assessor of Vernon and was hired in 1984. When Harry informed Sherry Vermilya about his decision to accept the position in Vernon, Sherry told Harry that he was going to make Harry the regional representative for Cape Cod and the Islands. Harry realized that if you want to start a family, it is better to be in one place. However, he was a bit heartbroken to leave Cole-Layer-Trumble as it had been such a positive experience for him.

Vernon proved to be a positive experience as well. Harry has always felt that he was fortunate to work with Jack. He provided Harry with the opportunity to learn about motor vehicles, talked about personal property and real estate fieldwork; he even brought Harry along to court hearings and pretrial hearings. Jack was the perfect mentor for a career as a tax assessor.

While Harry was working in Vernon, he was awarded his CCMA. Within the first fifteen months on the job, the Avon assessor's job opened. Harry applied for the position and was hired as the new assessor of Avon in June of 1985. Avon was a town that provided a lot of opportunities but also many challenges because it was a growing community. Harry was living in New Britain, which made for an easy commute. The Avon town manager, who had been there for quite some

time, always kept the retiring official on for the transition period. This meant that Clifton Clark, Assessor/ Building Official, stayed on from 1959 to 1985. Cliffton Clark made it an easy transition. Cliff worked alongside Harry on several town projects. One project in particular was acquiring temporary and permanent rights for the reconstruction of one of the main roads in town. Even though Harry oversaw the project, Cliff did the fieldwork. Avon continued to expand and grow. For example, Farmington Woods added more than 500 condominium units during Harry's tenure. At one point, 75 to 80 homes were being built each year in Avon in addition to condominiums. There was also expansion activity on Route 44. Positive and professional challenges were happening with administrative support.

Harry feels fortunate to have been able to work in Avon during the last 39 years. Over the course of Harry's tenure in Avon, he has worked under two town managers, Philip Schenck and Brandon Robertson. Being a part of such a stable community has given Harry the opportunity to grow professionally.

In addition to working in Avon, there was a period from 1995 to 2016 when Harry also worked as an assessor in Canton. It was not a contract or an arraignment that was specific to Harry. After Avon's town manager, Philip Schenck came back from an international town managers' meeting he addressed his staff, "That things could change in the future. There must be more collaboration between communities. For collaboration to occur, both sides need to want to succeed. If you see opportunities out there to do something with another community, consider it." In Harry's mind, Schenck was referring to public works, sharing equipment, and things of that nature.

Collaboration between communities came to fruition when Avon and Canton shared assessor services when the former Canton Assessor, Joanne Ferraresso accepted the assessor's job in West Hartford. Avon's Town Manager and Canton's First Selectwoman arrived at a suitable arrangement to share services. Harry provided assessment services for twenty-one years from 1995 until 2016. Avon and Canton were committed to this collaboration and the Town of Avon provided complete reassessment services, grand lists, staffing the office, and any other necessary services. During this time, Harry was a full-time employee in Avon and part of his job was to provide the assessment services to Canton.

There was a question presented by a committee member about services during a revaluation. "In that position, did this set-up allow you to give additional benefits to both towns?" Harry replied that during a revaluation, they would bid out the contract together. They use the same software. Instead of bidding out a 7,500-parcel project, it was a 12,000-parcel project. It was one price, and they allocated the cost based on the number of parcels. Harry remembers that it was a 65-35 split. Both towns were worked on at the same time. The hearings were staggered which worked out perfectly. They did three revaluations under this situation together.

Committee member comment: "This situation not only provided for a smooth transition for the revaluation, but the town also benefited because of the assessor, plus the cost saving of doing a revaluation together." Although there was never an estimate of cost savings, Harry knows that there was a savings. There was tremendous savings for the office as well as continuity. Harry could dial in with Canton property while working in Avon and vice versa. They were using the same computer system, which was housed in Avon. When Harry was in Canton, he could just dial in. Pricing motor vehicles was the same. Instead of pricing 25,000 vehicles, they priced

40,000. They would just go through them and split them at the end. As a result, there was a lot of savings. It was a nice professional challenge.

Because the setup was town to town, Harry could work between the two towns very comfortably. In many of these arraignments with individuals, the primary town is always looking to see if they are getting their allotted time. There was no issue like that with this arrangement. If Harry needed to move staff from one town to the other or take personal property from Canton to Avon for processing, it was never a problem.

Harry has been fortunate to have had a wonderful staff to work with throughout his career. Two of his staff members, Jackie Landon and Betsy Quist, have moved on to become assessors in other towns. Several other staff members have earned their CCMA.

Nothing has changed. In 2016, Harry's did not retire from Canton; they just ended the contract. He said that he still enjoys his position as assessor and wouldn't be doing it if he didn't enjoy it so much. What keeps him going is the community, the staff, and the management. There are aspects of the job that can frustrate a person in this position, but he has been very fortunate to enjoy both the work and the people.

Harry went on and stated that the ability to tax is very powerful. You must respect that, and you have to respect the residents that you're taxing. You can't always win, there must be some give and take. That's how Harry has approached it over the years. Avon's property values in relation to the capital area are quite high and the residents own a lot of cars. What Avon residents pay in motor vehicle taxes is equivalent to what some towns charge as a tax on a single-family home, paying four or five thousand dollars. Harry's philosophy is always to approach a situation as if he was the one standing on the other side of the counter. He stated that he does that quite often. What he will do is look into the office and pretend to be the taxpayer asking himself, "What do I see?" Does he see a mess; does he see efficiency? That perception will help you through your work and how the taxpayer perceives you and the office is his belief.

Harry said that he never gets upset with the property owner. They usually have a reason for coming into the assessor's office - whether they are trying to hoodwink him or they need an explanation about a tax bill or have a sincere problem. His advice is that you need to quickly figure out the reason for their being there and then address it. "You cannot take it personally if a property owner questions you."

Harry tells the story of his dealings with a local contractor in 1985 when he was first appointed and the value of good communication. During that year, a contractor had constructed a large three-story office building in town. Upon completion, the contractor had a Grand Opening. When the Certificate of Occupancy was issued, Harry placed a value on the building. Upon receipt of the Certificate of Occupancy value, the contractor was not pleased with the value Harry had placed on the structure. Being new to the Town of Avon, Harry began to worry about the contractor challenging him and what effect it might have on his job. Upon inspection, Harry determined that the third floor of the building had some minor unfinished areas. With that said, Harry determined that a minor adjustment could be made to the assessment in addition to the fact that the 1987 revaluation was approaching. The revaluation would take care of any inequities. The Contractor was satisfied. Later, the same contractor constructed a commercial strip center.

Again, the contractor was not happy with the value. He said the value placed on the property was too high. Harry explained to the contractor how the value was reached and that no adjustment would be made. Although the contractor was not pleased with the outcome, he thanked Harry for his work. This is an example of when good communication with a taxpayer goes a long way.

In 2015, Harry took on a consulting assessing position in the Town of Bloomfield. In the fall of that year the Town of Bloomfield lost their assessor to another town, and they needed to get a grand list out. The Bloomfield town manager contacted the Avon town manager to see if Harry would be interested in filling in. Harry thought it was a very good opportunity to explore and expand his knowledgebase. Bloomfield is a wonderful town. It has a variety of properties, including apartments and industrials. As interim assessor, Harry worked in Bloomfield for thirteen months until they hired a permanent assessor. Harry was also the acting assessor of Bloomfield from 2021-2022, when the current assessor was hired.

Harry said that he feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to be an assessor working in the State of Connecticut, along with a great group of people. He is impressed with the staffing in many of the assessors' offices around the state. Speaking of grand lists, during Harry's career he has signed more than 65 grand lists, including three in one year.

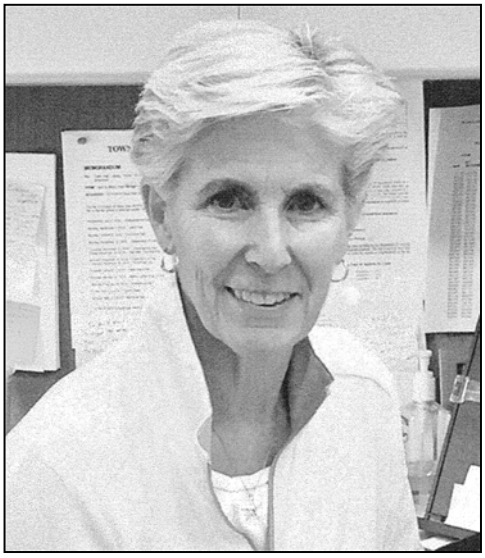
Harry believes that we are very fortunate in having dedicated individuals who are willing to teach at the UConn Assessors School. Harry feels that we should have more road shows. "There are a lot of staff members who would like to go, but with the small offices, it's hard to send two people to UConn. If you have the road show in the fall for 1A or 1B, then you could increase the number of participants and CCMA candidates. The school is great, the education is great, but you have to offer it more often. If you take 1A in the fall, you can take 1B at UConn. This would be an improvement."

Harry brought up an interesting thought. He feels that the education requirements for some of the assessor's positions could be more flexible, based on one's experience and education. There are many qualified people out there that could make amazing assessors. These candidates have fieldwork experience but may not have the number of years or education required. Some flexibility in the qualifications would be helpful. Harry states, "If you look, most assessors came from a revaluation background. Assessors training ground used to be the United Appraisal Company. There was a time that half the assessors came from the United Appraisal." Harry himself came from a revaluation background.

Harry was asked if he would be an Assessor again…. He replied that he definitely would!

Susan Altieri

(The interview was held at the Old Lyme Town Hall on November 21, 2024, with Charles Danna, Dan Kenny, Walter Kent, Robert Musson and Paul Slattery in attendance.)



When Susan first graduated from college she had a cast from her toes to her hip, so she wasn't running out to find a job. She first started out working at a bank. While working at the bank, she met Al Standish who was doing appraisals. Susan started talking to Al about work in the appraisal field. The best advice that Al gave her was that appraising is good when the market is good, but every town needs an assessor. Susan at 22 or 23 years old was not too sure of what an assessor's job involved. Al gave her some information; as a result, Susan took a week off from work, not to take a vacation, but to attend the UConn Assessors School. She took assessing classes and eventually had CCMA I and CCMA II under her belt.

Susan said that her mother found an advertisement in the newspaper where the Town of Windsor was looking for an assistant assessor. While still working at the bank, Susan had visited a number of different assessing offices to do appraising. She talked to Leon Jendrzejczyk in Glastonbury and to other assessors along the way. Susan said that she had not been on an interview in a while so she thought she would apply for the assistant assessors job in Windsor. At the time, Steve Kosofsky was the assessor. Susan did not know Steve, but thought that the position was something that she would like to do. She wound up getting the position. Steve later told Susan that Leon Jendrzejczyk gave her high recommendations, which she was very thankful for.

Susan said Steve was a great teacher and served as a mentor during her first job in an assessing office. She learned a lot from him, not just customer service, but things in the assessing world, how to deal with the public and administration. In 1989, Windsor began a CAMA revaluation with Vision Appraisal. Susan believes it was one of the first towns, if not the first town in Connecticut to use Vision Appraisal. Susan remained as the assistant assessor in Windsor for eight years until the assessor's position in Suffield came up. In 1995, Susan figured that Steve would remain in the Windsor assessor position for a while so she applied for the position in Suffield and became the town assessor.

Sidebar: *One of the biggest court cases that the town went through while Susan was in Windsor was the Loomis Chaffee School v. Town of Windsor in 1995. Unfortunately, the town came out on the wrong side of the decision. Loomis is a co-educational boarding school. The case dealt with the question of whether houses owned by the private school and used by the faculty as residences, were exempt from property taxes. These homes were offered to the faculty as a perk to live there and offset the cost of the school trying to find housing for their staff. This case went through the lower court and then onto the Connecticut Supreme Court. The court based its decision that the houses were used to carry out the school's education mission.*

What prepared her for the Suffield assessor's job was the fact that Windsor was such a diverse community with lots of commercial property, residential and exempt properties. Susan said she was always grateful to Steve for taking her under his wing, and teaching her about the job. Now that she was going on to Suffield as their town assessor, she looked at the occupation in general. It was nice to have known people because Steve allowed her to go to meetings and meet people and other assessors. If she had a question or was not sure of something, she could always pick up the phone and make a call. Susan remained in Suffield until 2002.

Susan enjoyed working for the Town of Suffield, but one day she was talking to Pat Juda, the assessor of Granby. She made comments about how great the town and town manager were in Granby. Joking, Susan asked Pat if she was thinking of retiring soon? Pat said that she probably had a three to five year plan before she retired. It was not long after that Pat called Susan to tell her that the three to five year plan was out. She and her husband Steve decided to retire and she wanted to give Susan a heads up on the opening of the job. Susan applied for the assessor's job in Granby in 2002 and has been there for some 22 years.

There have been lots of changes during Susan's time in Granby. Granby was the first town to go online with their assessor's database. When they first went online, there were some people in town that were a little fearful that their information was now out on the World Wide Web. Some people did not want their information out there, so they decided that for those one percent, they would suppress the information. This made everyone happy. Even today, Susan said they still suppress the information for those that request it. She said, "With the World Wide Web, forget about information in the assessors office, you can find a lot more details about someone if you really wanted too."

Susan said, "One of the best things about being in Granby for the past 22 years is just being there and building relationships with the citizens in town, getting to know people and forming bonds of trust and mutual respect." If a citizen has a question, they will call me about a building or some planning and zoning question. Sometimes I have the answer and sometimes I don't, but I always return their call and let them know where they can get their question answered. It's nice to know that the relationship I've built throughout the years is based on trust, integrity and credibility and that people will come in and ask me questions. I think it's important to take the time, try to educate the residents on the appraisal process and the Connecticut statutes. Most of the time they are grateful for the time I spent with them, and they have a better understanding of the appraisal and assessing process.

There have been a lot of changes in real estate along the way. Granby had a revaluation in 2022 and values increased significantly since the last revaluation in 2017. People like the idea of their homes appreciating and most people have read the newspaper, spoken to realtor or listened to the news, so they realize their homes have increased in value but somehow it seems less "enchanting" when you hear it from your local Assessor. I think it's just human nature, most products increase gradually (cost of milk or bread increase all the time), but with a five-year revaluation, values have increased so much and people really notice. Susan has gone through a 10-year revaluation and now the five-year revaluation is here to stay. She is happy in Granby and hopes to end her career there.

In 2022, Susan worked as a part time assessor in Colebrook, long enough to get a grand list out. She found that the extra time required, even as a part time assessor, was more than she bargained for. She talked to retired Waterbury Assessor David Dietsch about the Colebrook position and Dave eventually became the assessor in 2022.

Over the years, Susan has been involved in a number of assessing committees. She was the president of the Hartford Area Assessors Association in 1988. Her involvement in CAAO Committees includes the Education Committee for which she was the chairperson for a few years, the Legislative Committee and the PA 490 Committee. She's been a member of the PA 490 Committee for some 20 years and chairperson of that committee for 12 years.

There followed a discussion on the various issues with PA 490. Over the years, as a member of the PA 490 Committee, Susan has received many questions and emails with regard to the law. "It's not cut and dry. There is a lot of interpretation and there have been a lot of changes with recent legislation. With recent legislation, when assessors don't grant farmland, the homeowner can take their appeal to the Department of Agriculture and they will come out and certify it." Susan said, "They have Open Space in Granby and for those who are not farming their land, they can apply for Open Space. It's a win-win situation for everyone. Not all towns have Open Space." Susan said that she has seen lately, more questions from homeowners and farmers looking to find a benefit to cut taxes someway.

Granby's town leadership has been stable over the years. They had the longest standing Town Manager in the State of Connecticut. "This was great because you could see the consistency on how he handled department heads and how he allowed us to do our jobs. If we had any questions we could come to him." The Town has had some transitions in the last few years, but they are on stable ground. Susan feels fortunate for the relationship she has built over the years with the board of finance and selectman. They will come to her and trust her knowledge and experience to answer their questions on various matters.

Susan was asked if she had to do it all over again would she become an assessor. What she would really like to have done is to become a professional softball or basketball player. That would have been a lot more fun. She attended Providence College on a full athletic scholarship and those were great times She was able to travel all over the world as a result. She played in Puerto Rico, California and her team played the Italian National Team. After college, Susan played semi-professional softball for ten or twelve years.

Sidebar: *In 2017, Susan was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. She played basketball at North Haven High School where she averaged 24.6 points per game. She also played volleyball and softball at North Haven High. Susan played basketball and softball at Providence College.*

Susan said that she feels very fortunate for the people she has met along the way in assessing. She knows that she can call on them for assistance. "There are some days that might not be great, but all in all she does enjoy being with people and having that interaction." She has found in Granby, it's not just the assessing; it's the relationships that she has been built and that makes all the difference. "We all know that no one likes their assessment or to pay taxes, but when people

come in, be respectful, take the time to talk with them and educate them along the way. Sometimes they might not agree, but usually by the time they leave, they have a better understanding of the process. Although they may still not like their assessments or paying their taxes, at least you took the time and showed interest in them."

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News Update on Previous Interviewed Assessors & Articles

The *News Update on Interviewed Assessors & Articles* feature is an addendum to those assessors that the CAAO Research/Historian Committee has already included in past publications of the *History of Connecticut Assessors.* Additional information has been gathered since their write-ups that might be of interest to CAAO members. Previous information on these assessors can be found in the summary index of volumes #1, #2, #3, #4 and #5 on the CAAO website (caao.com) under Historian Committee.

***Assessoreporter,* history update on mailing hard copies:** This is an update on an article that appeared in Volume #1 on the *History of Connecticut Assessors*, page 39, entitled *History of the Assessoreporter.* The CAAO Executive Board voted Tuesday, July 12, 2022, to discontinue the printing and mailing of hard copies of the *Assessoreporter*. There were seven copies mailed in May 2022, and the post office returned all of them. One person had passed on (in 2020) and one was apparently in a home with Alzheimer's. All of the other addresses were correct. Therefore there was no reason for the post office to return them. With only five copies to be mailed, it was ascertained that one of the recipients could indeed access the on-line version, and it is likely that another could too. That would only leave two copies plus the Archive copy to the UConn Dodd Center. With the cost in excess of $12.50 each per issue to mail, the CAAO Executive Board decided it would not be worth the expense. Hard copies of the *Assessoreporter* will be delivered each year to the Dodd Archive Center at UConn during the annual assessors school.

Michael A. Bekech, update: Volume #2, page 115. Michael retired from the town of Killingworth in January 2024. He was the assessor there from June 2017 to January 2024. Mike was president of CAAO in 1996 and was awarded the Assessor of the Year in 1995. He was also the assessor of Groton and Manchester. He served on the governor's commission of State Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal Systems Advisory Board in 1987, serving as its chairman for 14 years.

Robert J. Flanagan, update on Bob's passing: Volume #1, page 109. Bob passed away September 13, 2022. Bob began a 29-year employment with the City of New London as assessor in 1963 to 1972, as assessor-director of real estate from 1982 to 1992 and acting city manager for various periods. In 1978 Bob was elected president of the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO). He was awarded the Certified Assessment Evaluator (CAE) by IAAO. Bob was also a member of the Appraisal Institute and held the MAI designation. He taught numerous courses for IAAO and at the UConn Assessors School over the years.

Connecticut Tax Commissioner F. George Brown appointed Bob to the original CCMA Committee in 1974.

Steven Kosofsky, update on retiring: Volume #3 page 99. Since the October 18, 2012 interview, Steve has retired from the town of Windsor after 31 years of service, the first seven as the assistant assessor and the last 24 (1987 to 2011) as the assessor. Following his retirement, he went to work for Quality Data Service as an assessor software support consultant and spent five years with the Crudele family. In October 2016, Steve accepted the position of Town Assessor of Newington where he continued for almost six years until April 2022. He returned to work for the Crudele family but unlike his prior position, this time he was hired as Director of Revaluations for eQuality Valuations, LLC which is a subsidiary of Quality Data Service.

Steven Hodgetts, update on award: Volume #3, page 126. Steve was the recipient of a CAAO Distinguished Service Award at the November 2, 2023 CAAO Fall Meeting. Steve was the assessor of Meriden from 1985 to 1999 and the assessor of Middlefield from 1999 to 2014 and 2016 to 2017.

Barbara Perry, update Life Membership: Volume #4, page 95. Barbara was awarded CAAO Life Membership at the 2022 Spring Meeting held at the Aqua Turf in Southington on May 12th. Barbara was the former assessor of New London and Salem and is the mother of Deep River Assessor Robin O'Loughlin. Robin's interview with the CAAO Research/Historian Committee is in this publication.

1000-Year Flood Hits Connecticut. Update on communities recover from disasters: Volume #2, page 35. On Sunday August 18, 2024 there was a devastating storm that flooded parts of Connecticut, sweeping away roads, bridges and buildings. According to published reports, 77 businesses were wrecked and 19 homes were completely destroyed. Oxford recorded two different sites of rain over a 24-hour period. One measured 14.83 inches; the other 13.5 inches. Sunday's rainfall breaks the 24-hour state rainfall record set in 1955 at the hands of Hurricane Diane. That was 12.77 inches on August 19, 1955. What exactly is a 1000-year flood? It's not a flood that happens once only every 1,000 years, but a flood that has a one in 1,000 chance of happening in any given year. Some of the towns that sustain the most damage were located in the southwestern part of the state. They include: Oxford, Monroe, Naugatuck, Newtown, Seymour, Southbury and Woodbury. It was announced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on August 21, 2024 that federal disaster assistance was available to the State of Connecticut for Fairfield, Litchfield and New Haven counties.

Robert (Bob) Coates update: Volume 4, page 115 and Volume 5, page 99. Bob passed away October 3, 2024 at the age of 77. He was the former assessor of North Haven from 1983 - 2003 and the assessor of Derby from 2003 to 2018. Bob also held part-time assessing positions in Haddam and Sprague. Bob was residing in Ocala, Florida at the time of his passing. He was the president of the New Haven County Association of Assessing Officers in 1989. He was awarded a CAAO Life Membership at the May 9, 2019 CAAO Spring meeting.