



City-County Summit



TAX COLLECTION WORKING GROUP

March 31, 2004

The Working Group met on two occasions. Participants included Allegheny County Treasurer John Weinstein, City and County Council Members, representatives of the Mayor and representatives of Pittsburgh Public Schools. Below are the findings and recommendations of the Working Group:

1. Approximately 3 additional weeks are needed before any recommendation can be made concerning merging of tax billing and collection services.
2. If the County Treasurer will provide the City with pet license collection services at the rate it charges the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (\$1.00 per license), this City Service should be handled by the County Treasurer's Office. The City's direct cost is at least \$2.43 per license.
3. Sale of tax delinquent properties does not offer any opportunity for a merger. The County does not foreclose on tax liened properties (this is done by GLS or local municipalities), and the Second Class City Treasurer Sale Act provides a less expensive means for clearing title on tax delinquent properties (City Treasurer procedures eliminate the payments required when GLS or another municipality forecloses on tax liens, such as payments to the Prothonotary for filing a Writ of Scire Facias and for filing a Writ of Execution, payment to the Sheriff for service of the writs; advertising costs for the City Treasurer also may be lower than foreclosures).
4. Authorizing Legislation from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is required if the County is to collect the City and School tax or if the City is to collect the County real estate tax.
5. The School Board will pay the City \$4,700,000 in 2004 for collection of real estate, mercantile and earned income taxes, and would welcome any merger that reduces its collection costs.
6. For the County to send City and School real estate tax bills in January, County Council would have to amend the County's administrative code as County bills currently are not sent until February.
7. For the County to bill and collect the City and School tax for the current year under the installment plan requires authorizing legislation from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
8. Consolidation of real estate tax refunds (occurs most often after successful assessment appeals by the owner) is highly desirable since refunds must be made by all three taxing bodies.

Attachments:

- A. Minutes of March 1, 2004 meeting;
- B. Minutes of March 29, 2004 meeting;
- C. Ira Weiss, Esq. letter dated March 19, 2004;
- D. City Finance Dept. Real Estate Collection Cost Survey; and
- E. City Finance Dept. Pet License Collection Cost Survey.