



Walton County Tax Collector

A Report to Our Citizens

Fiscal Year 2009

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Mission

"Excellence in
Customer Service"

Vision

To collect and distribute taxes,
licenses, and fees in a prompt,
accurate and efficient manner
while demonstrating our
"Commitment to Service",
and offering a positive work
environment for our
employees.

Values

- Integrity and Honest
- Communication
- Positive Relationships
- Customer Focus
- Teamwork
- Effectiveness
- Knowledge
- Creativity

From The Desk of the Tax Collector



I am pleased to present the 2009 Annual Report of the Office of the Walton County Tax Collector. Throughout the year, our office has strengthened internal controls, implemented improved business practices, and utilized the capabilities of available technologies to improve our services to you. Our top priority remains the continuous improvement of customer service to all of those we serve.

By law, this office operates on the income derived from fees and commissions we earn for each of the services rendered. These fees and commissions are determined by the Florida Legislature in accordance with the Florida Statutes. As tax collector for Walton County, I will continue to pursue opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which we conduct business. By doing so, I am able to fully fund essential operations and end the year with unexpended income in the amount of \$2,221,470.18 which we distribute to the taxing authorities we serve in proportion to their share of the total funds collected.

We welcome your feedback and suggestion to improve our services, and encourage you to contact us at (850) 892-8121 or through our "Contact Us Page" on our Web site at www.waltontaxcollector.com.

It is with great pleasure that I serve the citizens of Walton County.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rhonda Skipper".

Rhonda Skipper, Walton County Tax Collector

2009 Employees of the Quarter



Ashleigh Simmons
January - March



Becky Nall
April - June



Tammy Day
July - September



Robin Braddam
October - December

"Commitment to Service"

About the Tax Collector's Office

What do we do?

- Collects property taxes for every local government agency and taxing authority that has the power to levy taxes.
- Acts as Walton County's agent for the issuance of Dog On the Beach and Beach Driving permits.
- Serves as the State of Florida's agent for The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, The Department of Environmental Protection, The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission and The Department of Revenue.

How are we set up?

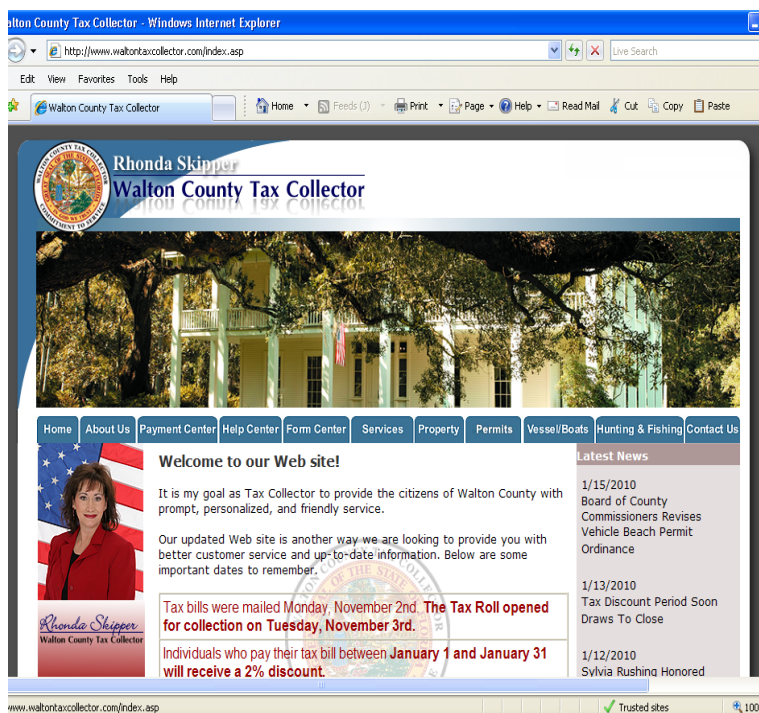
The Office of the Tax Collector is an independent and separate government entity. The Tax Collector can and does operate independently of the Walton County Board of County Commissioners and the other Constitutional Offices. The Tax Collector's budget is approved by the Florida Department of Revenue.

How do we operate?

The Tax Collector's Office employs 28 full-time employees, including the Tax Collector. Our main office is located in the Walton County Courthouse in DeFuniak Springs. An office is also located in the Courthouse Annex in Santa Rosa Beach to more conveniently serve residents in the south end of the county.

How do we make it easier for customers to access our services?

In addition to transacting business with us in person through our two conveniently located customer service centers, customers are encouraged to make their payments by mail or by e-commerce through the Web site at www.waltontaxcollector.com.



Waltontaxcollector.com

A vast amount of information related to the services the Tax Collector's Office provides are available online.

Additionally, many forms are available for download and transactions can be completed online.

We strive to provide our customers with as much information as possible online to allow customers the convenience of accessing the information at their discretion.

Online Transactions

Last year 6, 755 online transactions were completed.

How We Have Advanced In 2009

Continuous improvement is a guiding principle at the Walton County Tax Collector's Office and one of four priority goals for the organization. The continuous improvement approach is utilized on a daily basis to analyze the services performed by the office and make changes and decisions to operate as efficiently as possible. In addition to Continuous Improvement, the other three priority goals for the office are Customer Service Excellence, Successful and Engaged Workforce, and Fiscal Responsibility.

Customer Service Excellence

Call Center Enhancement. Each year we take a look at how we can better meet the needs of our customers. One area identified that needed attention was our Call Center. Two customer service representatives answer our phones at any given time. During the busy tax season, the large volume of calls coming in did not give us the opportunity to adequately give each customer the attention they deserved.

After researching the resources available and the needs of the office, the Call Pilot 150 was installed in the Call Center.

When all of our phone lines are busy, the Call Pilot 150 greets our customers and provides them with important information while on hold. As soon as one of our Customer Service Representatives is available, the customer is transferred to a live operator for assistance.

Document Imaging Solution Strategy.

A comprehensive document imaging system to house all of office documents electronically has been implemented. The system allows employees in both our DeFuniak Springs and Santa Rosa Beach offices to access the same information.

The system saves the office a significant amount of money in paper costs as the majority of documents no longer have to be printed.

Additionally, customers can be more easily and efficiently assisted because employees can access all correspondence and transactions related to customer accounts.

Our compliance with Florida Records Law is also managed through this system.

Online Sale of County Held Tax Certificates

Implemented the online sale of county held tax certificates in order to increase the availability to investors and expedite the revenues to the taxing authorities.

Continuous Improvement. This year the staff were empowered to help trouble shoot, problem solve, and generate ideas to aid the office in operating more efficiently.

A total of six Process Improvement Teams were assigned and tasked with projects for improving the office.

Projects resulted in:

- Enhanced Call Center
- Redesigned Registration Renewal Notice
- Redesigned Tax Bill to be implemented in 2010
- Software enhancements to the Dog On the Beach and Beach Driving permit applications

Successful and Engaged Workforce.

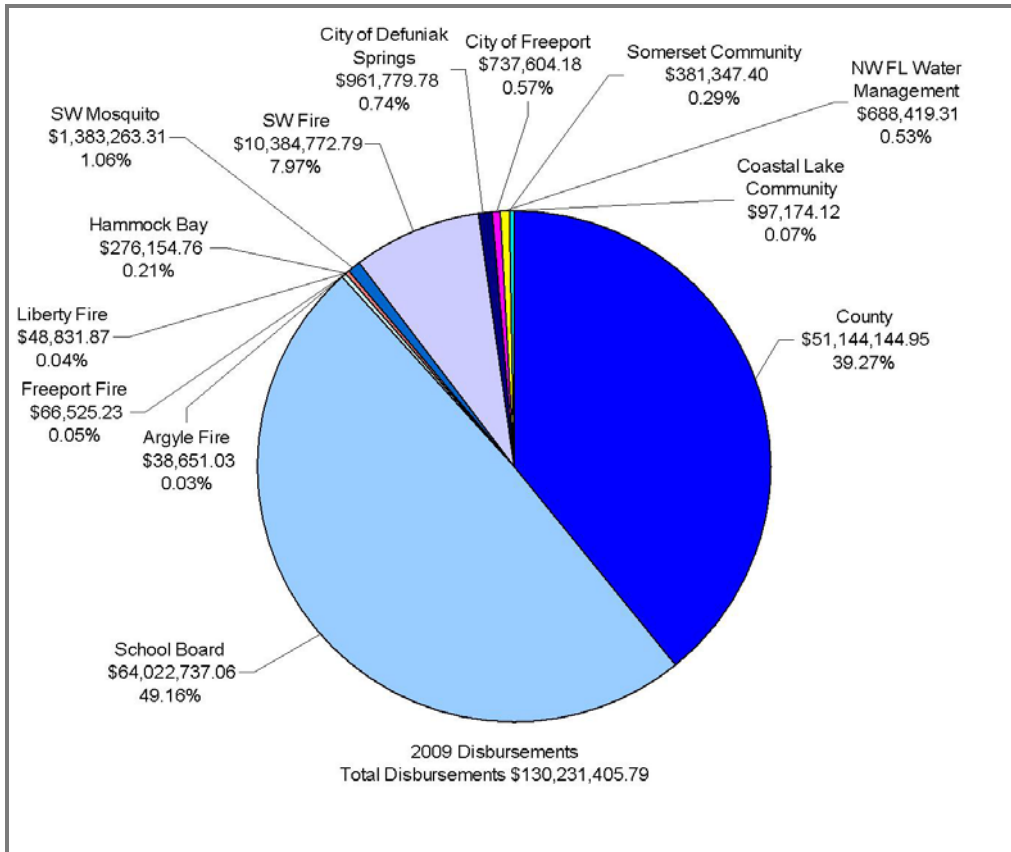
Following an employee satisfaction survey, it was clear the organization would benefit from more joint briefings to ensure that both offices were aware of important information in a timely manner and consistent procedures were being followed.

To enhance better communication efforts, Good to Great meetings were instituted once a month. These meetings are short briefings with the staff and executive staff. The meetings allow information to be communicated in a consistent manner and it also provides the staff with the opportunity to bring any areas of concern to the attention of the Executive Staff.

Additionally, the employee newsletter was modified to serve as a primary information resource for employees. The Grapevine newsletter addresses office issues, clarifies policies, provides updates and information, and shares employee news with the staff.



Collections & Distributions

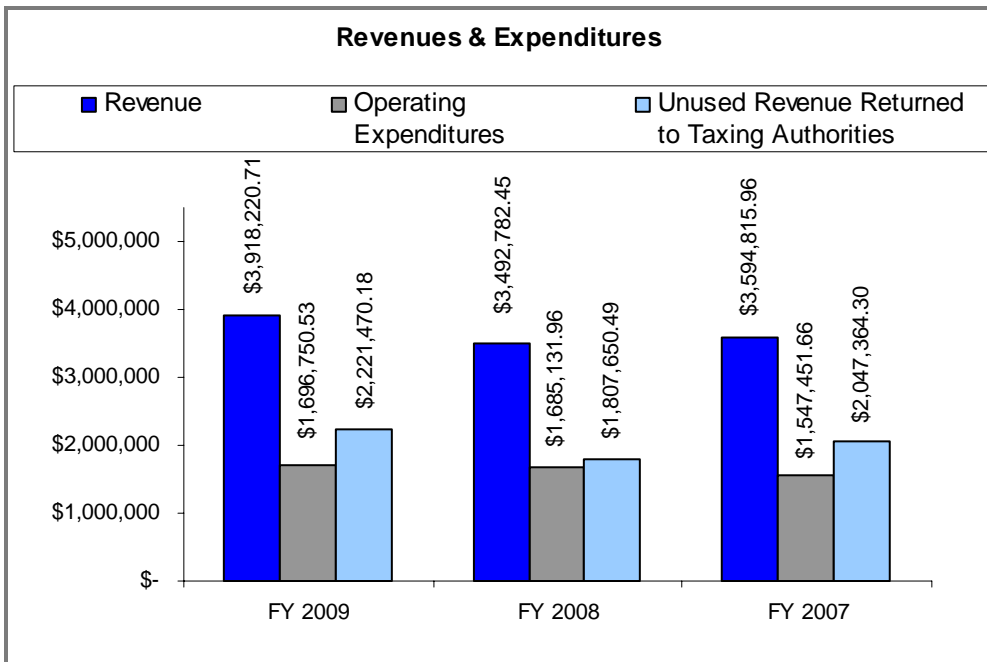


Our office distributed over a \$130 million in property taxes to Walton County's 13 taxing authorities. The largest distributions were made to the County and School Board and totaled over \$115 million.

The Tax Collector's Office is a fee based office. Tax payer dollars are not used to operate the office. Commission fees fund the operating budget, which is approved annually by the Florida Department of Revenue.

Efficient operations and cost reduction measures keep office operating expenses to a minimum. Fees generated over and above operating expenses are proportionately returned to the taxing authorities as excess revenues.

In 2009, \$2.2 million in excess fees were returned to the taxing authorities.



Accountability

Each year our office is audited by the County's contracted auditor. We are pleased to share the 2009 audit once again reported no findings.

Our Finance Department, consisting of Finance Director Jim Morrison and Fiscal Assistant Nathan Thomas work diligently each day to account for every penny collected by our office.

What Our Customers Say

The most important measure of how well we are doing comes to us in the form of the honest feedback we receive from the customers we serve.

That feedback comes to us through a number of channels. Many customers are quick to convey their level of satisfaction with our efforts to meet their needs through verbal comments directed toward our front counter personnel and supervisors. Many others contact the Tax Collector by telephone, through our Web site, or through personal letters in which they express their concerns, observations, comments, or suggestions. On a daily basis, we present the customers who are visiting our walk-in locations with comment cards to make it more convenient for a broader cross section of our clientele to share their reactions to our performance.

The written responses we obtain in this manner are tracked to identify trends over time.

All of the customer feedback received is highly valued and closely scrutinized by the Tax Collector and senior management staff.

Whenever feasible, customer suggestions are implemented. In that way, we are better able to earn the trust and confidence of the people we serve.

Below are some of the regular comments we receive from customers regarding the level of service they have received.

“Exceptional Service”

“Professional and courteous staff”

“Knowledgeable and helpful”

“Assisted quickly”

We're on Facebook!
Become a fan and get
the latest news and
information. Connect from
our homepage at
waltontaxcollector.com.



Employee Recognitions



Patty Winstead was honored by her co-workers as the Employee of the Year 2009



Christel Maples received the Excellence in Customer Service Award from the Better Business Bureau of Northwest Florida



Sylvia Rushing was honored by Tax Collector Rhonda Skipper as the recipient of the Leadership In Excellence Award.

Outlook for 2010

Our organizational theme for 2010 is “Framing our Future”. It is anticipated that 2010 will bring unique challenges, as the economy seeks to correct itself. Property tax roll projections indicate significant reductions in the overall tax revenues and our available operating fees. In addition, we anticipate loss of valuable employee knowledge and experience as we anticipate pending retirements of key leaders in our organization.

Our strategy is to focus on three priority issues in response to these projections:

1. Succession Development
2. Fiscal Responsibility Strategy in Anticipation of Budget Reductions
3. Response to Business Trends

Succession Development is a systematic approach to identifying key positions within the organization and defining the leadership characteristics and competencies necessary for developing leaders to possess in order to be effective successors when those positions are vacated. The result will be a clearly defined individual leadership development plan that guides our efforts to train, mentor, and prepare the future leaders for promotional opportunities.

Fiscal Responsibility will be increasingly critical and require our strategic evaluation/analysis of all expenses to achieve the highest possible level of cost avoidance or reductions.

Response to Business Trends- We will continue to respond to trends identified in our review of available data and our effort to forecast public service industry trends in order to strategically position our operations and resources to effectively respond and perform. Examples include an increase in taxpayer participation in the installment payment plan, increase in internet, mail and phone payments, legislative mandates, decreasing interest on fund investment instruments, and a move toward social media as a source for important information related to government services.

We look forward to both the challenges and opportunities that 2010 will bring to the Walton County Tax Collector’s Office and reaffirm our “Commitment to Service” as we continue our goal to provide the absolute best service possible to our stakeholders, partners and the wonderful customers we are blessed to serve each day.

In The Community



The Employees Club of the Walton County Tax Collector’s Office organized a Gospel Sing to raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in February. The event raised over \$2,200. *Pictured above: The Staffords, Robert & James, and Rhonda Skipper join together for a song. Below: Employees from the Tax Collector’s Office man the concession stand during the event.*



Tax Collector Rhonda Skipper talks with citizens during the 2009 WZEP Taste of Home Cooking Show.