

Approved: April 28, 1995
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Audrey Langworthy at 8:30 a.m. on April 27, 1995 in Room 519--S of the Capitol.

Members present: Senator Langworthy, Senator Corbin, Senator Martin, Senator Bond, Senator Clark, Senator Feleciano, Jr., Senator Hardenburger, Senator Lee, Senator Ranson, Senator Sallee and Senator Wisdom.

Committee staff present: Tom Severn, Legislative Research Department
Chris Courtwright, Legislative Research Department
Don Hayward, Revisor of Statutes
Elizabeth Carlson, Secretary to the Committee

Conferees appearing before the committee: John LaFaver, Secretary, Department of Revenue
Mark Beck, Director, Property Valuation Division

Others attending: See attached list

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Senator Martin made a motion to approve the minutes for the meetings of April 7, 1995 a.m. and April 7, 1995, p.m. as corrected. The motion was seconded by Senator Corbin. The motion carried.

PROPOSED INTERIM STUDIES

Senator Langworthy called the attention of the committee to a list of proposed interim studies and asked for any additions or suggestions.

CONFIRMATION HEARING: MARK BECK, DIRECTOR, PROPERTY VALUATION DIVISION

Secretary John LaFaver, Department of Revenue, introduced Mark Beck, Director, Property Valuation Division. He said the search for the Director of PVD has been long and diligent and it came to an end when Mr. Beck was appointed. He gave some background information on Mr. Beck.

Mr. Beck said he comes to Kansas without a background in Kansas law but maybe that is good because his perspective is a little different. He said he will look at the issues that face the Division. He spoke a little about the property taxes and said taxes should be made equitable. He said he thinks the priorities have been set through the court order and the court order really tells them what should be done. He said they are looking at intra-county equalization and agricultural land use values. This will include education and training for all people involved. His focus also will be to attempt to develop a level of confidence in PVD and trust between the legislature and PVD and also the taxpayers and PVD. He pledged to be as open and honest with the Legislature as he could and if there are any questions or concerns, he asked that he be called for information. He will try to keep the lines of communication very open and try to keep the legislature more informed as to what is happening.

Senator Langworthy asked him to outline his priorities during the next few months. Mr. Beck said they are looking at the court order. He said PVD also needs to focus on an assistance mode with the counties and to see what the counties need. He said the committee has already met on the agricultural land use values and there has been some progress made. He said the committee will meet every month during the summer interim and he is sure there will be continued progress. He said they are looking at the Division as a whole; he thinks the education program here is phenomenal compared to other states and that program will be continued.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION, Room 519-S
Statehouse, at 11:00 a.m. on April 27, 1995.

Senator Feleciano asked about the upgrading of computer systems. Mr. Beck said they are looking at the computer system; however, the problem is the systems become obsolete so fast. Senator Sallee said he hoped there would be some guidelines for the counties when the systems are upgraded. He also asked if the 35 statewide mill levy is removed, would it relieve some of the pressure and help to make the taxes more equal? Mr. Beck said it would relieve some of the strain on a state wide basis but the focus will never change because of the overlapping of districts in counties.

Senator Ranson asked since Mr. Beck has been in a similar job in Nebraska, what could he use in Kansas; also why did he leave his job in Nebraska. Mr. Beck said he left because of the reorganization of the division, they were top heavy and there were going to be severe budget cuts. Senator Ranson also asked about the cutting of positions in the Division and Mr. Beck said he is currently looking at reorganization but he was not prepared to say anything more. There are 110 positions in the Division with some vacancies. Nebraska only had about 30 positions but Nebraska had contracted out a number of functions in the past year. He also said there are a number of functions which are done in Kansas that were not done in Nebraska.

Senator Martin asked what Mr. Beck understands is the court order date for compliance? Mr. Beck said it was the end of 1996. Senator Martin said he is concerned about the legislature cutting positions in the Division and if there is not a county appraiser, the work has to be done. How is this going to be accomplished? Mr. Beck said he could not give a clear answer. He wants to make sure the Division is doing the functions required by law. Senator Martin said he thinks the Judge is very concerned if any progress is being made. Mr. Beck said he has not visited with the Judge at this time but they are working very hard trying to get where they need to be. There is definite improvement. He said he will be happy to keep everyone informed about what is being done.

Senator Bond says he feels there is not enough information coming from PVD and BOTA and he hopes the Secretary and the Director of PVD will feel free to communicate with the legislature and keep them informed. Mr. Beck reiterated that his highest priority is in developing a level of confidence and trust and keeping the communication lines open with the Legislature.

Senator Clark asked how he handled his liaison position with the legislature in Nebraska? He said he worked with the legislature in drafting statutes and in working with the legislature so the laws would be possible to be administered. He said there was constant communication. Senator Clark also asked what experience Mr. Beck has had with the oil and gas industry. He said his experience is somewhat limited because there is limited oil and gas industry in Nebraska.

Senator Lee said she would like to thank Mr. Beck for the interaction between him and the committee members at the first meeting of the agricultural land use values committee.

Senator Bond made a motion to recommend Mr. Beck to the full Senate for confirmation as Director, Property Valuation Division. The motion was seconded by Senator Corbin. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

