

Response to Questions on the FY 2007 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Supervisor Kauffman

Question: Provide details on the Department of Tax Administration staff reductions which occurred in FY 2004 associated with the conversion to an automated process for County vehicle decal distribution.

Response:

The Department of Tax Administration (DTA) does not anticipate staff reductions resulting from the elimination of County vehicle decals. As part of the FY 2004 Adopted Budget Plan, a funding reduction of \$483,685 associated with the implementation of the automated "Advance Decal Sales" program occurred. This program provides County residents, with no delinquent taxes, their vehicle decals by mailing the decal with Personal Property Tax bills. The cost savings from the Advance Decal Sales program were achieved through a decrease in DTA counter traffic, which allowed for the reduction of seasonal and part-time employees.

Administrative benefits from the elimination of the vehicle decals are expected to be minimal and/or diffused throughout the department. It is not anticipated to free up positions to be abolished and it may help enhance existing service delivery to County taxpayers. For example, every year as part of the SMILES Campaign, large sections of employees within DTA provide additional cashiering and customer support during the payment of personal property tax bill and purchase of vehicle decals occurring each fall. In addition, many employees get pressed into service from time to time to help handle telephone calls. Coupled with technological advances, this staffing process has been an effective way of trying to handle an increasing and more complex workload using existing resources. It is hoped that any potential workload decrease associated with the elimination of decals might help ease the need to pull staff from their primary duties. At the same time, staff is cautious that the true workload impact will not be known until the program is implemented. A public education effort is anticipated and experience suggests that citizens will still have questions that need to be addressed by phone, e-mails, correspondence and at the cashiering counters. Although the \$25 decal fee will be eliminated, the same number of tax payments will need to be processed. In addition, many citizens still prefer utilizing the cashier counters in the fall to get account adjustments, pay in cash, seek language assistance and to purchase decals (such as for new cars). DTA anticipates that the fall workload should diminish to some extent because of the decal elimination. Finally, staff is mindful that the collection rate is a preeminent issue and any staffing flexibility that may result from the elimination of decals will also provide flexibility to help ensure adequate resources are brought to bear in the collection of taxes.