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Counties waiting on state to send out tax bills

Issues with budget software causing delay

By Howard Greninger

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TERRE HAUTE — While several Wabash Valley counties are preparing to mail out tax bills, Vigo County has been waiting on a state budget order to allow it to calculate its bills.

John Mallers, director of the budget division of the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance, said in an e-mail Monday to the Vigo County auditor's office that the state agency was "having some issues with our budget software, which is delaying us."

A budget order allows the county auditor to make an "abstract," which is a summary of totals that will be distributed to each governmental unit based on the approved budget.

That abstract must then be approved by the state auditor before tax bills are mailed.

The state has certified budgets in 51 of the state's 92 counties, five of which were certified last week, said Mary Jane Michalak, spokeswoman for DLGF.

Michalak said Vigo County's budget will be certified today. That certification took 43 days, faster than the average of 44, she said. The computer issue was specific to Vigo County, she said.

Only 11 counties have sent out tax bills, with three additional counties planning on mailing tax bills this week, plus seven more next week, the DLGF reports. Michalak said property tax bills statewide on average are 30 percent lower because of property tax controls from the Indiana General Assembly.

Vanderburgh, the first county budget certified on April 24, had a 49 percent decrease in property taxes, while Adams County had a 21 percent decrease, Michalak said.

Vigo County Auditor Jim Bramble said if the budget order is given, the county could complete its abstract next week. Then tax bills would have to be printed by the county treasurer's office. "We would be pushing to get tax bills out at the end of the month, with payment due in late August or early September," Bramble said.

That bill will be for spring taxes. Vigo County, like other Wabash Valley counties, also will collect a fall property tax Nov. 10.

Todd Nation, president of the Terre Haute City Council, said the council on Thursday will conduct a special meeting to consider obtaining a bank loan to provide the city with money until tax disbursements are made. The council could vote on approving loans at its July 17 meeting.

In Sullivan County, tax bills are to be printed on July 15 and will be mailed by Aug. 1, said county Auditor Jean Harris. The spring tax bill will be due Aug. 29, Harris said.

In Parke County, tax bills are to be mailed by July 31, said County Auditor Diane Hazlet.

"The tax bill will be due Aug. 15. We got our state budget approval order on July 3, so have been working since then on the tax bills," Hazlet said.

Vermillion County Auditor Sherrie Koma said that county "is shooting for the end of August or the first of September to mail tax bills, then they will be due 15 days after that.

"We had to go to the new 18-digit parcel numbers, which the state made mandatory. The state wanted everything uniform. We had to redo all our [property parcel] numbers, then the assessor had to redo their [property numbers] to match our numbers. That is where we are at and hopefully that will all be done this week and we can get the ball rolling" on an abstract to send out tax bills, Koma said.

Koma said taxpayers can pay tax bills now based on what they paid last year. "It may require an adjustment later, but a small adjustment is better than making two payments close together," Koma said.

Nancy Coleman, first deputy auditor for Clay County, said the county is working on its abstract, which is expected to be finished this week and sent to the state auditor for final approval. "We don't have a set [tax bill] due date right now," Coleman said.