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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION

## Many don't claim tax relief

### More seniors, disabled, veterans could be paying less in taxes

By MARK HICKS • The Leaf-Chronicle • November 28, 2008

Many Montgomery County residents are eligible for help on their property taxes and don't realize it.

Tax notices recently sent to residents across the county included yellow brochures that outline five available tax relief/freeze programs.

"What we are finding is more and more people that should know about their options really don't know about the tax relief and tax freeze," said County Trustee Brenda Radford.

The brochures present an overview of Elderly Tax Relief, Disabled Tax Relief, Disabled Veterans Tax Relief, Disabled Veteran Widow(er) Tax Relief and the Clarksville-Montgomery County Tax Freeze.

"We hope everyone is reading the brochures and asking questions," Radford said. "Even if they don't qualify, they might tell a neighbor or somebody they go to church with who might be eligible."

Radford and her staff are trying to get the word out and sign up more eligible people.

In 2007, Radford said, 796 residents qualified for tax relief, which brought \$248,625 in state reimbursements. The local reimbursement was \$95,088.

So far, 1,296 vouchers have been issued for 2008, which will total \$586,956 in state reimbursements.

For the local tax freeze, which was approved by the County Commission in March and became available this year, 832 people have signed up. Radford said the state Comptroller's Office predicts as many as 3,400 county residents may be eligible for the tax freeze.

Residents must reapply each year.

"We still have people coming in wanting to sign up for the tax freeze, but they don't know about the other tax relief," said Jo Ann Baggett, deputy trustee.

Radford recalled one such situation when a lady realized she could have been receiving the disabled veteran widow relief for several years.

### City/county efforts

City residents should apply for the tax relief at the Finance and Revenue Office, 1 Public Square. The office can be reached by calling 645-7436.

The city and county are in the midst of approving an agreement where everyone would fill out applications for tax relief/freeze at the county Trustee's Office. The City Council already has approved it, and the County Commission should take up the matter in December.

"It's the same exact forms," said Wilbur Berry, city finance commissioner. "There's no reason that it could not be handled in one place."

Berry said it's best if people start at the Trustee's Office when applying for tax relief, and Radford said that in some cases, her staff fills out paperwork for the applicants and sends them to the city revenue office to sign the form in front of officials there.

### To apply

#### Related articles:

- **TAX RELIEF/ FREEZE PROGRAMS**  
SATELLITE TAX COLLECTIONS
  - **Elderly Homeowner — Must be 65 or older and provide proof. Annual income cannot exceed \$24,790. Must own home and use as primary residence. Up to \$315 of tax relief available. Deadline is April 6.**
  - **Disabled Homeowner — No age limit, but proof must be provided. Must be "totally" and permanently disabled as defined by the Social Security Administration. Annual income cannot exceed \$24,790. Must own home and use as primary residence. Up to \$315 of tax relief available. Deadline is April 6.**
  - **Disabled Veteran Homeowner — Must have service-related disability. Must provide identification. Must own home and use as primary residence. Up to \$1,364 of tax relief available.**
  - **Disabled Veteran Widow(er) Homeowner — Available to surviving spouse of a disabled veteran and was married to the vet at the time of death. Must provide spouses death certificate. Up to \$1,364 of tax relief available.**
  - **Clarksville-Montgomery County Tax Freeze — Allows property taxes to be "frozen" at current rate. Must be 65 or older and provide proof. Annual income cannot exceed \$31,780. Current year tax notice or other proof of ownership required, as is a copy of voter registration card.**
- On the following days, these locations will serve as tax collection sites from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Jan. 9 — East Montgomery Volunteer Fire Service, 200 McAdoo Creek Road.
  - Jan. 16 — St. Bethlehem Volunteer Fire Service, 3850 Guthrie Highway.
  - Jan. 23 — Cunningham Volunteer Fire Service, 3967 state Highway 48.
  - Jan. 30 — Woodlawn Volunteer Fire Service, 2274 Dover Road.
  - Feb. 6 — Palmyra: Agriculture Extension Service at Cumberland Heights.

Radford said residents can call the county office at 648-5717 for information, or they can visit 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, and during February when taxes become due, from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Also, the office will be open 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Feb. 28.

Additionally, Radford has arranged to collect taxes at county volunteer fire departments during January, and residents also can sign up for tax relief/freeze at that time. She said the measure will provide a convenience to residents and save some a trip into town to pay taxes. The Sheriff's Office will provide security.

She urged residents seeking to apply for the tax relief/freeze to bring their documentation, such as proof of income and age; a death certificate if they are applying for widow benefits and disability information. Also, both spouses must sign the application.

"Sometimes it's very heart-wrenching when an elderly person comes in, and you can tell they've been trying to pull together money to pay their taxes, and when you can turn around and tell them, 'I can put you on this (relief program),' " Baggett said. "You can just see the relief in their face. It can be very emotional, some of them leave crying."

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