2016

ARANSAS COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

The information contained in this report is to provide the citizens of Aransas County and other interested parties with an overview of the information compiled by the Aransas County Appraisal District

Aransas County Appraisal District

601 South Church Street Rockport, TX 78382 (361) 729-9733

Dear Property Owner,

The employees of the Aransas County Appraisal District strive to provide the citizens of Aransas County with fair and accurate property valuations. Property taxes play a vital role in local government. However, property taxes can be a frustrating and confusing subject for many property owners. No other topic in local Texas Government can stir the opinion of property owners like the appraisal process. With that in mind, every year we provide the property owners in Aransas County with this report to outline some of the beneficial information that our work produces.

We not only appraise property for the taxing entities, we also administer property tax exemptions for homeowners, veterans and disabled persons. This is another part of our responsibility to you, the property owner. It is our duty to advise you of anything in the Texas Property Tax Code that will benefit you and help reduce your tax liability. If you *think* you may qualify for an exemption please call our office and ask; we will be happy to assist you.

Our website has a great deal of information. Links to property tax resources, online GIS mapping and property search capabilities are only a few of the tools available. We continually update the content of our website to give you the most current information possible. However, if you find a link that no longer works or the information in the link is outdated, please let us know, we will correct it as soon as possible.

The employees of the District are also citizens of Aransas County, and the property owners are our friends and neighbors. We take our responsibility to you very seriously. Our goal is to make sure we provide you with fair and accurate appraisals and are able to answer your property tax questions accurately. But, just as important, we want to make sure property owners are treated as we would want to be treated, with respect and dignity.

The most important message we can convey is, *we work for you*, the taxpayers of our great county. So if you have questions, please call or drop by our office, we will be happy to help you.

Sincerely,

Kevin Jamison, RPA
Chief Appraiser
Aransas County Appraisal District

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Executive Summary

The Aransas County Appraisal District has published this report to provide our citizens and taxing units with an overview of the information we compile each appraisal cycle. The information will allow the reader, at a glance, to have a better understanding of the values and properties located within the county.

As always, the goal of the Aransas County Appraisal District is to provide our customers with the best service possible in a professional and courteous manner.

Our Goal

Our goal at the Aransas County Appraisal District is to provide the best service possible to our consumers, the local taxpayer. The fair and accurate appraisals we produce allow the local taxing entities to make sound financial decisions which results in tax rates that are lower than most other nearby counties. Aransas County is an exceptional place to live and we take great care in producing accurate appraisals for the public.

Our Appraisal District

The Aransas County Appraisal District is an independent political subdivision within Aransas County. We appraise all taxable property located within the boundaries of the county annually. The Board of Directors of the Aransas County Appraisal District is the governing body of the District and its members are appointed by our local taxing authorities. Their primary function is to insure that the District has the resources to perform the task of producing accurate appraisals as outlined in the Texas Property Tax Code. Other duties of the Board include adopting an annual budget, appointing an appraisal review board, and the adoption of policies that provide for the general operation of the District.

The Chief Appraiser is appointed by the Board of Directors and is the Executive Officer in charge of the daily operations of the District. The Chief Appraiser hires the staff for the district and is responsible for the production of the appraisal roll used by the entities to adopt tax rates. Other responsibilities include supervision of the staff and maintenance of the facilities of the District.

The District as of January 1st, 2015 appraised property for ten taxing jurisdictions. The following is a list of those taxing authorities.

Aransas County

Aransas County Independent School District

Aransas Pass Independent School District

Port Aransas Independent School District

City of Rockport

Town of Fulton

City of Aransas Pass

Aransas County MUD#1

Aransas County Navigation District

Lamar Improvement District

Aransas County is one of the smallest land mass counties in the state. However, when parcel count is taken into consideration we are right in the middle of all Texas counties with approximately 29,500 parcels. The 2015 certified property value in Aransas County was in excess of 3.5 billion dollars of real and personal property and that amount also puts Aransas County right in the middle of appraised value of all Texas counties.

The Appraisal Review Board consists of five members appointed by the Board of Directors. They serve staggered terms and are limited to three two year terms. To be eligible to serve on the ARB the individual must have been a resident of the county for at least two years. The ARB is responsible for the approval of the appraisal records. They also are the first formal avenue of dispute resolution between property owners and the District. Other responsibilities include correcting errors in the appraisal roll, acting on supplemental changes to the certified roll and making determinations on the proper application of exemptions and special appraisals.

The District relies on the advice of the Agricultural Advisory board for the information necessary to produce the agricultural values used in the special appraisals on those qualified properties. Each board member gathers information and relays their finding to the chief appraiser in periodic meetings. The chief appraiser then uses that information to develop the net to land calculations used in these appraisals.

Appraisal of Property

The physical inspections of the properties in the district began in late summer 2016 and will end in February 2016. ACAD uses Pictometry aerial images as well as on-site physical inspections for the data collection during the appraisal cycle. The district inspects from a planned driving schedule all properties at least every two years. The predominance of improved properties are physically inspected every year. When property changes are noted the appraisal team then field verifies the dimensions and quality of the change and enters the data into the CAMA system. Every year is a reappraisal year. Notices of appraised value are provided to every property owner regardless of whether or not the property meets the requirements set forth in the Property Tax Code.

Local Economic Conditions

Unlike other areas in Texas, Aransas County has had a stable and at times a robust real estate market. Aransas County continues to be a desirable retirement destination and an exceptional family oriented community. The positive national press coverage and effective marketing

campaigns by the Chamber of Commerce have many people considering Rockport-Fulton as desirable retirement or vacation home choice.

Tourism remains the driving force in our local economy. Rockport-Fulton was voted one of the best places in America to live on the nationally televised show “Today in America”. USA Today readers voted Rockport as the 5th best small coastal town in America in 2015. The Aransas peninsula is bound by Copano Bay to the west and Aransas bay to the east, making it one of the premier fishing locations along the entire Gulf Coast.

Recently, another national flag hotel chain has selected Rockport-Fulton for one of their franchise locations. In the past three years several national flag hotels have been built. These new hotels allow Aransas County to host a larger guest population in the busy summer months. With the increased population during these times, facilities like water, sewer and emergency medical services are reaching capacity. The local governments are currently addressing the challenges of providing necessary services to the ever increasing population. Residential development will also increase as utilities become available.

Legislative Climate

The 84th Texas Legislature resulted in a constitutional amendment that raised the homestead exemption amount from $15,000 to $25,000. This amendment also prohibits the enactment of a law that would impose a transfer tax on fee simple real estate transactions. The 85th Texas Legislative session begins in January of 2017 and property tax reform is at the top of the list for the upcoming session. A recent lawsuit over whether the present system of school finance was constitutional in Texas was settled. It was found that the present system was “not unconstitutional”. This ruling was not without controversy. The Justices hearing the case stated “Our Byzantine school funding ‘system’ is undeniably imperfect, with immense room for improvement. But it satisfies minimum constitutional requirements,”. This 100 page ruling also urged lawmakers to make "transformational, top-to-bottom reforms that amount to more than Band-Aid on top of Band-Aid." With the recent ruling, and the constant pressure on the budgets of homeowners to finance local schools, property tax reform will be at the forefront of lawmakers list of things to do.

The Appraisal Process

The district has recently implemented an in-house designed tablet based solution for field work. This system allows appraisers to formulate a “drive order” of the properties for physical inspection that creates efficiencies in both miles driven and workflow while in the field.

The Pictometry images and the GIS system employed by the District are both very popular products for our citizens. Starting in 2017, the District will have the county flown every year to update the aerial image library. Property owners often comment on how beneficial this information is to them for planning property uses as well as making decisions on building placement. The district’s website has these tools as well, allowing property owners to research our data. Pictometry images are used both in the field and in the office to verify size of improvements or other physical characteristics when field access is not possible. We have data

layers in our GIS system that graphically represent trends in values, sold properties, land tables, school districts and any other information beneficial to the appraisal of property in the district.

Shortly after certification of the appraisal roll the field work begins for the next appraisal cycle. The appraisers gather information in the field to insure the physical dimensions of the properties are accurate. Updating properties regularly in both physical size and condition increases the accuracy of the data we produce. Any changes in the physical attributes of a property are corrected in the CAMA system so we can insure that information gathered on sales in the county are accurately employed as data points for the valuation of all properties.

Each January, businesses are sent a rendition form so they may render their property used for the production of income. All businesses are required to make an annual rendition to the District. Prior to the rendition deadline a notification is placed in the local newspaper as a reminder of this requirement. The appraisers begin to process renditions as they are returned and this continues for a short period after the April 15th deadline. In early March the local sales are examined and adjustments are made to the property schedules. Ratio studies used to determine the accuracy of the values and that information is used to determine the amount of adjustment necessary to reach market value.

As soon as possible in April is the notices of appraised value are mailed to homestead properties. The remaining properties are sent notices of appraised value by the last week of April or at least by May 1st each year. Once notices are sent the staff begins to visit with property owners to try to resolve issues they may have with the current valuation of their property. Most value disputes are resolved in this manner.

2016 County-Wide Sales Ratio Information

The information in this section is statistical information on the level of appraisal within the Aransas County Appraisal District. This information was compiled from sales with a date range of 1/1/2015 to 04/21/2016. This analysis took into consideration all sales whether or not they were considered to be valid sales for the time period. The study also includes foreclosures as an indicator of value.

Median 96.24%

Average Mean 99.49%

Weighted Mean 96.33%

During the appraisal process, ratio studies are used to determine if the market area being examined needs adjustment. This ratio information represents the entire county and most specific market areas will have ratios that differ from these numbers.

Property Reports

The following pages will outline the data contained our files. This data is used by the Comptroller's office to report to the Texas legislature specific property tax related information. The local governments use this data to set their budgets and tax rates.

These documents list the types or classes of properties and the number of each within our county. Exemption data such as the number of each type and the category amount for each type is also provided. The Grand Totals report will break down values and exemptions by taxing unit. This allows for a more in depth look at each individual taxing unit and the property contained within its boundaries.

We hope this information is beneficial and if you need any other information please let our staff know and we will be more than happy to provide it for you.