



RAYMOND J. WOJTOWICZ

Wayne County Treasurer

TERRANCE A. KEITH
Chief Deputy

ROBERT J. GRDEN
Deputy / Financial Services

JAMES W. BICKLEY
Deputy / Land Management

Feb. 18, 2008

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact:
Keith A. Owens
Director of Communications
(313) 224-5408

Wayne County Treasurer announces comprehensive taxpayer assistance initiative

A press conference announcing the launch of “Operation Normandy” is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 19, at 11 a.m., in the 5th floor conference room at the Office of the Wayne County Treasurer, 400 Monroe, 5th Floor, Detroit, Michigan.

In recognition of the ongoing economic devastation causing hardship for so many Wayne County property owners, Wayne County Treasurer Raymond J. Wojtowicz, has configured the most ambitious, comprehensive, and creative program ever launched by this office designed to confront the crisis head-on. This community outreach campaign has been tagged “Operation Normandy” in reference to the massive World War II effort rallying the allied forces to defeat a common foe. Similarly, in order to assist Wayne County residents in combating these tough economic times, Treasurer Wojtowicz has formed an ‘allied force’ of more than 20 non-profit organizations whose resources will be combined with the resources of this office to wage an all-out offensive designed to provide assistance taxpayers having difficulty paying delinquent property tax foreclosure. The organizations include: Latino Family Services, U-SNAP-BAC, MISSION of Peace, United Housing Coalition, Legal Aid and Defender of Detroit, ACCESS, Arise Detroit! Michigan Interfaith Trust Fund, Southwest Housing Solutions, the Accounting Aid Society among others.

In addition to non-profits, Treasurer Wojtowicz is also seeking financial assistance programs consistent with the low-cost loan program underwritten by Comerica Bank with the Michigan Interfaith Trust Fund to assist in the payment of taxes.

“Quite frankly, it is about survival,” said Treasurer Wojtowicz. “Whatever our office can do to help people navigate their way through the myriad hardships they are experiencing we are more than happy to do.



RAYMOND J. WOJTOWICZ

Wayne County Treasurer

TERRANCE A. KEITH
Chief Deputy

ROBERT J. GRDEN
Deputy / Financial Services

JAMES W. BICKLEY
Deputy / Land Management

I believe strongly that it is in our best interest, and in the best interest of Wayne County, socially as well as economically, to be pro-active on this matter.”

The outreach campaign will be implemented in two phases over the next four months. Phase I, which is being launched today, is designed to accomplish three things, all of which are focused on the basic health and survival of economically distressed Wayne County taxpayers.

1) Significantly increase awareness of the services provided by the Wayne County Treasurer Taxpayer’s Assistance Department (TAD) regarding delinquent real property taxes. TAD was formed in November 2006 to listen to our customers, evaluate the customer needs and provide the assistance needed. Included in its mission was to increase the number of financial hardship applications providing additional time to pay. As a result, in 2007 we had more than a three-fold increase the number of substantial hardship applicants and approvals, receiving 951 applications and approving 705. By keeping in touch with the applicants nearly half of those granted hardship in 2007 have already paid their taxes in full.

2) Encourage our customers to confront their fears of calling for assistance by recognizing people/organizations they know and trust. To this end, we have partnered with 20 non-profit organizations to assist Wayne County families with payment of delinquent property taxes.

3) Most importantly, we are urging our customers to **call us**. In closing remarks at November 2007 Detroit meeting of the National Conference of Mayors, the mayors expressed their astonishment upon learning from 70% of those whose property was lost due to mortgage foreclosure never contacted the lender and that foreclosure may have otherwise been prevented or delayed by with the benefit of a phone call. The public’s reason for not calling was the fear that the call would only accelerate the mortgage foreclosure. In short, the public did not trust the lender to do what was in the best interest of the customer.

Hence, the thrust of the 2008 outreach campaign is to simply tell the public: “If you have a problem with paying delinquent property taxes, call the Wayne County Treasurer. ***We’re here to help.***”

Phase II will take place in June with the use of community groups and neighborhood associations going door-to-door to contact those persons with occupied property who did not contact either the Treasurer’s office or any of the nonprofit organizations.