

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2016 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 55

**FISCAL
NOTE**

BY SENATORS SYPOLT, MILLER AND BLAIR

[Introduced January 13, 2016;

Referred to the Committee on Government

Organization; and then to the Committee on Finance.]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §11-1C-2, §11-1C-4 and §11-1C-7 of the Code of West Virginia,
2 1931, as amended, all relating to reproduction, distribution and sale of tax maps; defining
3 terms; specifying powers of the Property Valuation Training and Procedures Commission
4 to promulgate rules; specifying duties of county assessors; requiring that sale,
5 reproduction and distribution of certain records be in accordance with specified legislative
6 rules; and specifying certain fees.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That §11-1C-2, §11-1C-4 and §11-1C-7 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended,
2 be amended and reenacted, all to read as follows:

ARTICLE 1C. FAIR AND EQUITABLE PROPERTY VALUATION.

§11-1C-2. Definitions.

1 For the purposes of this article, the following words shall have the meanings hereafter
2 ascribed to them unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

3 (a) "Timberland" means any surface real property except farm woodlots of not less than
4 ten contiguous acres which is primarily in forest and which, in consideration of their size, has
5 sufficient numbers of commercially valuable species of trees to constitute at least forty percent
6 normal stocking of forest trees which are well distributed over the growing site.

7 (b) "Managed timberland" means surface real property, except farm woodlots, of not less
8 than ten contiguous acres which is devoted primarily to forest use and which, in consideration of
9 their size, has sufficient numbers of commercially valuable species of trees to constitute at least
10 forty percent normal stocking of forest trees which are well distributed over the growing site, and
11 that is managed pursuant to a plan provided for in section ten of this article: *Provided*, That none
12 of the following may be considered as managed timberland within the meaning of this article:

13 (1) Any tract or parcel of real estate, regardless of its size, which is part of any subdivision
14 that is approved or exempted from approval pursuant to the provisions of a planning ordinance
15 adopted under the provisions of article twenty-four of chapter eight of this code; or

16 (2) Any tract or parcel of real estate, regardless of its size, which is subject to a deed
17 restriction, deed covenant or zoning regulation which limits the use of that real estate in a way
18 that precludes the commercial production and harvesting of timber upon it.

19 (c) "Tax commissioner", "commissioner" or "tax department" means the State Tax
20 Commissioner or a designee of the State Tax Commissioner.

21 (d) "Valuation commission" or "commission" means the commission created in section
22 three of this article.

23 (e) "County board of education" or "board" means the duly elected board of education of
24 each county.

25 (f) "Farm woodlot" means that portion of a farm in timber but may not include land used
26 primarily for the growing of timber for commercial purposes, except that Christmas trees, or
27 nursery stock and woodland products, such as nuts or fruits harvested for human consumption,
28 shall be considered farm products and not timber products.

29 (g) "Owner" means the person who is possessed of the freehold, whether in fee or for life.
30 A person seized or entitled in fee subject to a mortgage or deed of trust securing a debt or liability
31 is deemed the owner until the mortgagee or trust takes possession, after which such mortgagee
32 or trustee shall be deemed the owner. A person who has an equitable estate of freehold, or is a
33 purchaser of a freehold estate who is in possession before transfer of legal title is also deemed
34 the owner.

35 (h) "Electronic" means relating to technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless,
36 optical, electromagnetic or similar capabilities.

37 (i) "Paper" means a tax map or document that is not electronic.

38 The definitions in subdivisions (f) and (g) of this section shall apply to tax years beginning
39 on or after January 1, 2001.

§11-1C-4. Commission powers and duties; rulemaking.

1 (a) On or before October 1, 1990, and thereafter as necessary, the property valuation
2 training and procedures commission shall perform the following duties:

3 (1) Devise training and certification criteria for county assessors and their employees and
4 members of county commissions, which shall include a definition of "appropriate staff member"
5 as the term is used in section six of this article relating to required training, which definition shall
6 include deputy assessors as provided for in section three, article two of this chapter;

7 (2) Establish uniform, statewide procedures and methodologies for the mapping, visitation,
8 identification and collection of information on the different species of property, which procedures
9 and methodologies shall include reasonable requirements for visitation of property, including a
10 requirement that a good faith effort be made to contact any owner of owner-occupied residential
11 property: *Provided*, That the commission is not authorized to establish the methods to value real
12 and personal property, but shall have the authority to approve such methods;

13 (3) Develop an outline of items to be included in the county property valuation plan
14 required in section seven of this article, which shall include information to assist the property
15 valuation training and procedures commission in its determination of the distribution of state funds
16 provided pursuant to section eight of this article.

17 (b) On or before July 1, 1991, the commission shall establish objective criteria for the
18 evaluation of the performance of the duties of county assessors and the Tax Commissioner.

19 (c) In the event the Tax Commissioner and a county assessor cannot agree on the content
20 of the plan required under section seven of this article, the commission shall examine the plan
21 and the objections of the Tax Commissioner and shall resolve the dispute on or before the first
22 day of the fiscal year following the fiscal year in which the plan was submitted to the commission
23 for resolution.

24 (d) The commission ~~shall have the power to~~ may make such rules as it ~~deems~~ considers
25 necessary to carry out the provisions of this section, which rules shall include procedures for the
26 maintenance, use, sale and ~~reproduction of microfilm, photography and tax maps~~ reproduction of
27 paper and electronic tax maps. Any rules adopted by the commission prior to October 1, 1990,
28 under subsection (a) of this section are exempt from the provisions of article three of chapter
29 twenty-nine-a of this code: *Provided*, That the commission shall file a copy of any rule so
30 exempted from the provisions of chapter twenty-nine-a of this code with the legislative rule-making
31 review committee created pursuant to section eleven, article three, ~~of said chapter~~ twenty-nine-a
32 of this code prior to November 30, 1990.

33 (e) The commission ~~shall have the authority to~~ may make and enter into all contracts and
34 agreements necessary or incidental to the performance of its duties and the execution of its
35 powers under this article.

36 (f) In order to fund the costs of the requirements of this article, the valuation commission
37 ~~shall have the authority~~, on a one-time basis, ~~to~~ borrow \$5 million and ~~to~~ distribute ~~such~~ those
38 funds according to need and the valuation plan submitted by the counties. Upon request of the
39 valuation commission, the state Board of Investments shall loan, under commercially reasonable
40 terms to be determined by the parties, up to \$5 million to the valuation commission, on a one-time
41 basis, from one of the various funds administered by the state Board of Investments.

42 (g) The commission shall, ~~be required, in the event that~~ if the Tax Commissioner has failed
43 to do so, ~~to~~ appoint one or more special assessors if it is the determination of the commission that
44 an assessor has substantially failed to perform the duties required by sections seven and eight of
45 this article. A writ of mandamus shall be the proper remedy if the commission fails to perform any
46 of its duties required by law.

§11-1C-7. Duties of county assessors; property to be appraised at fair market value;

exceptions; initial equalization; valuation plan.

47 (a) Except for property appraised by the State Tax Commissioner under section ten of this
48 article and property appraised and assessed under article six of this chapter, all assessors shall,
49 within three years of the approval of the county valuation plan required pursuant to this section,
50 appraise all real and personal property in their jurisdiction at fair market value except for special
51 valuation provided for farmland and managed timberland. They shall utilize the procedures and
52 methodologies established by the property valuation training and procedures commission and the
53 valuation system established by the Tax Commissioner.

54 (b) In determining the fair market value of the property in their jurisdictions, assessors may
55 use as an aid to valuation any information available on the character and values of such property,
56 including, but not limited to, the updated information found on any statewide electronic data
57 processing system network established pursuant to section twenty-one, article one-a of this
58 chapter. Valuations ~~shall~~ may not be based exclusively on such statewide electronic data
59 processing system network and usage of the information on such files as an aid to proper
60 valuation does not constitute an implementation of the statewide mass reappraisal of property.

61 (c) Before beginning the valuation process, each assessor shall develop a county
62 valuation plan for using information currently available, for checking its accuracy and for correcting
63 any errors found. The plan must be submitted to the Tax Commissioner on or before December
64 1, 1990, for review and approval, and ~~such~~ the plan must be revised as necessary and
65 resubmitted every three years thereafter. Whenever a plan is submitted to the Tax Commissioner,
66 a copy shall also be submitted to the county commission of that county and the property valuation
67 training and procedures commission, and that county commission and the property valuation
68 training and procedures commission may forward comments to the Tax Commissioner. The Tax
69 Commissioner shall respond to any plan submitted or resubmitted within sixty days of its receipt.

70 The valuation process ~~shall~~ may not begin nor shall funds provided in section eight of this article
71 be available until the plan has received approval by the Tax Commissioner: *Provided*, That any
72 initial plan that has not received approval by the commissioner prior to May 1, 1991, shall be
73 submitted on or by such date to the valuation commission for resolution prior to July 1, 1991, by
74 which date all counties ~~shall~~ have an approved valuation plan in effect.

75 (d) Upon approval of the valuation plan, the assessor shall immediately begin
76 implementation of the valuation process. Any change in value discovered subsequent to the
77 certification of values by the assessor to the county commission, acting as the board of
78 equalization and review, in any given year shall be placed upon the property books for the next
79 certification of values: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of this code to the
80 contrary, the property valuation training and procedures commission may authorize the Tax
81 Commissioner to approve a valuation plan and the Board of Public Works to submit such a plan
82 which would permit the placement of proportionately uniform percentage changes in values on
83 the books that estimate the percentage difference between the current assessed value and sixty
84 percent of the fair market value for classes or identified subclasses of property and distribute the
85 change between the two tax years preceding the tax year beginning on July 1, 1993. This
86 procedure may be used in lieu of placing individual values on the books at sixty percent of value
87 as discovered or may be in addition to ~~such~~ the valuation. If ~~such~~ this procedure is adopted by a
88 county, then property whose reevaluation is the responsibility of the board of public works and
89 the State Tax Commissioner shall have its values estimated and placed on the books in like
90 manner. ~~Such~~ The estimates shall be based on the best information obtained by the assessor,
91 the board of public works and the Tax Commissioner and the changes shall move those values
92 substantially toward sixty percent of fair market value, ~~such~~ the sixty percent to be reached on or
93 before July 1, 1993.

94 (e) (1) The county assessor shall establish and maintain as official records of the county
95 tax maps of the entire county drawn to scale or aerial maps, which maps shall indicate all property
96 and lot lines, set forth dimensions or areas, indicate whether the land is improved and identify the
97 respective parcels or lots by a system of numbers or symbols and numbers, whereby the
98 ownership of such parcels and lots can be ascertained by reference to the appropriate records:
99 *Provided*, That all such records shall be established and maintained and the sale, ~~or reproduction~~
100 ~~of microfilm, photography and maps~~ reproduction and distribution of paper and electronic tax
101 maps shall be in accordance with legislative rules promulgated by the commission.

102 (2) The following fees apply in addition to any fee charged by the assessor or the map
103 sales unit of the property Tax Division of the Department of Revenue for the sale or reproduction
104 of ~~microfilm, photography and~~ paper and electronic tax maps pursuant to the legislative rules
105 referenced in subdivision (1) of this subsection:

106 (A) For a full map sheet, an additional fee of \$3 per copy shall be charged, which shall be
107 deposited in the Courthouse Facilities Improvement Fund created by section six, article twenty-
108 six, chapter twenty-nine of this code;

109 (B) For a parcel reproduction on 8 ½ x 11" or 8 ½ x 14" paper, an additional fee of \$1.50
110 per copy shall be charged, which shall be deposited in the Courthouse Facilities Improvement
111 Fund created by section six, article twenty-six, chapter twenty-nine of this code; and

112 (C) For all other map sizes, an additional fee of \$2 per copy shall be charged, which shall
113 be deposited in the Courthouse Facilities Improvement Fund created by section six, article twenty-
114 six, chapter twenty-nine of this code.

115 (f) Willing and knowing refusal of the assessor or the county commission to comply with
116 and effect the provisions of this article, or to correct any deficiencies as may be ordered by the
117 Tax Commissioner with the concurrence of the valuation commission under any authority granted

118 pursuant to this article or other provisions of this code, ~~shall constitute~~ are grounds for removal
119 from office. ~~Such~~ A removal may be appealed to the circuit court.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to clarify that the tax map rules apply to both paper and digital tax maps, and to create conformity between the language of the statute and the supporting legislative rule.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.