



# Saint Louis County

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## NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release:**

September 24, 2013

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### **County Board approves offering free assessment services to local governments**

Calling it an issue of consistency and uniformity, the St. Louis County Board today unanimously approved eliminating fees currently charged to cities and townships for assessment services. The resolution goes into effect January 1, 2014. The measure is expected to save local units of government up to \$2 million annually.

Commissioner Pete Stauber brought the proposal forward, “By eliminating fees, this affords local government units the opportunity to use the County for assessor services without cost being an issue. They can use the reduction in fees for property tax relief or they can redirect the savings toward other expenses.”

The measure also will help achieve the recommendation made in 2012 by a blue ribbon panel that studied assessment practices. The panel recommended the Board adopt a true county assessment system, meaning the County Assessor would be responsible for conducting all property assessments county wide. This will help ensure that assessments are conducted in a manner that is timely, uniform and fair.

Today’s action does not mandate a true county system, allowing local jurisdictions the option to continue using a local assessor. In 2013, the City of Duluth turned to the County for assessor services. Numerous other cities and townships have followed suit.

Currently, there are 13 private assessors hired as contractors by various cities and townships within the county. Commissioners expressed concern that an unintended consequence of this resolution is that these individuals may lose work, and urged that the Assessor's Office show preference in hiring them when adding staff to handle the anticipated increased workload.

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