

# TAX ASSESSORS' OFFICE BUDGET REQUEST

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SUZANNE WIDENHOUSE

CHIEF APPRAISER – BOARD OF ASSESSORS

# ADDITIONAL STAFFING REQUESTS

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- Staffing requirements for real property field appraiser: One per 4000 parcels
  - 73,219 Real Parcels in Muscogee County
  - Currently have 9 Real Property Field Appraisers – should have 18 – Mayor's budget recommended adding 5 - \$258,952
  - Need an Appraisal Technician per Appraisal Division (Personal Property, Commercial, Residential) to handle increases in permits, sales processing, appeals, business licenses. Mayor's budget recommended adding 3 - \$136,624

## DIGEST REVIEW AND HB 581

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- 2022 Department of Revenue Digest Review which took place in 2023 indicated we were deficient in the number of appraisers per real property accounts: “The County is not meeting IAAO appraiser staffing standards which specify maintaining an accounts-per-appraiser ratio under 4,000.”
- Average parcels per appraiser currently is 8,135, more than double the standard.
- HB 581 changed the countywide revaluation requirements to every three years. Previously it was recommended that it be done between 3 and 6 years. It is now **required** that a full revaluation take place every three years beginning in 2025.
- Last time staffing was increased any significant degree was in 2008 when 3 appraisers and one mapper were added. At that time there were approximately 67,000 parcels.

## CHIEF APPRAISER RECLASSIFICATION

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- Request reclassification of Chief Appraiser from 134-15 to 134-25 - \$12,114 (number on the budget was incorrect, this number has been verified by Finance.)
- Responsible for the valuation of more than \$21 Billion of real and personal property
- Responsible for the management of specialized assessment programs: Brownfield, Historic Rehabilitated, Landmark Historic, Conservation Use Valuation Assessments
- Homesteads and Disabled Veteran's Homesteads
- Industrial Revenue Bonds and Abatements
- Enterprise Zones and Abatements
- Letter of Recommendation provided by the Board of Assessors.

# CHIEF APPRAISER – CONT.

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- During the Director's Pay study (Prior to Evergreen), most directors were raised to within 20% of their peer group salaries. Chief Appraiser was increased to just 30% of what comparable chief appraisers were making.
- The subsequent Evergreen study indicated the Chief Appraiser was 28% below peers. After an appeal to City Manager, Chief Appraiser was raised 6% placing the Chief Appraiser 22% below peers.
- New Director positions are being advertised with starting grade I34-I2, just 3 steps below Chief Appraiser, despite her years of service. (Most recently Director of Transportation and Civic Center/Cultural Affairs)



**Columbus, Georgia, Board of Assessors**  
*GEORGIA'S FIRST CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT*

5/13/2025

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Chief Appraiser  
Suzanne Widenhouse

April 7, 2025

Mr. Isaiah Hugley  
City Manager  
Columbus Consolidated Government

RE: Letter of Endorsement for Chief Appraiser Pay Increase

Dear Mr. Hugley,

I am writing on behalf of the entire Board of Assessors to formally endorse increasing the Chief Appraiser's annual salary to \$127,904.45.

Chief Appraiser Widenhouse has successfully navigated the Tax Assessors' office through the uncertainties of COVID, the aftermath of a hyper-inflated market, and the confusion of new legislation. She is an asset to the city and is recognized within her industry as an expert. She has been called to testify to the legislature on more than one occasion and serves on the Georgia Association of Assessing Officials Policy Committee and the Department of Revenue's Education Steering Committee.

Given her exemplary performance, we strongly believe that Chief Appraiser Widenhouse is deserving of a salary increase. Such recognition would not only be a testament to her hard work but also serve as an encouragement for continued excellence.

Thank you for considering this endorsement. I am confident that Chief Appraiser Widenhouse will continue to be an invaluable asset to the Board of Assessors.

Sincerely,

Jayne Govar  
Chairman