

Change, they say, is inevitable. The technological advances over the past several years was driving a lot of change in our daily lives. Now COVID-19 has created needs that have sped up our acceptance of some of the technological advances and created additional needs to accomplish our daily tasks in new and creative ways. And, so it is at the Property Appraiser's Office. We are experiencing the need to change in order to effectively, efficiently and affordably continue to deliver and enhance our services to Alachua County. Much of what we implement will be after hours and invisible to you, much like when you update a program on your home computer. Hopefully, it makes things run better and you never know what got changed. Other changes will be significant and highly visible.

In order to protect your health and safety as well as the health and safety of our staff, the Property Appraiser's Office will become "by appointment only". This change will not only protect your health and safety, it will also assure that the right person to address your concerns is available when you are available. You will not need to make repeated trips to our office nor wait for long periods of time to be seen in order to speak with a representative of the office. We have enhanced our digital communication tools and encourage you to make your appointment either a phone call or a video meeting. Either way will save you the time it takes for you to commute to downtown. We can exchange documents digitally and accept electronic signatures for most applications. This change will appear just after the first of August.

At the same time, we have been working on upgrading our phone service. The big visible change is that the phone will now be answered with a menu of choices so that you can select the service you need and be directed to the appropriate person more quickly. This change will also appear shortly after August 1st.

We are also upgrading our website. We very much appreciate the many people who have commended us for our current website over the years and we are extremely sensitive to the discomfort altering a tool that one uses every day can create. But our current website has become more and more difficult to keep it up and running and it does not easily lend itself to adding additional services for the users. The new site will look like our current site when you first open it and all the current services will be there. Our searches will still be there but how you enter the data to request the search will look a little different. The new site will allow us to develop and deploy new services. We have our eye on an improved communication tool where you can relate with this office about your property without having to call us. We are working on a homestead exemption application that will auto fill your parcel data and enable you to file from home. We hope to add the other exemptions once we have the Homestead Exemption completed. We hope to also provide an on-line tangible personal property filing application.

Our business partner in the new website project supports Property Appraiser websites across the country. Their expertise will expand our vision of what we can provide and assures us that we will always have access to the "latest and greatest" improvements in our industry and best of all we will be saving taxpayer money.

Stay tuned. We are working on other improvements for you.